"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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Vol. XXXIV CONTENTS No. 5/6

PAGE

Pendle Hill, Herbert Corby 265

Communique from Russian H.Q., Marguerite Edgelow 269

To An Embankment Suicide ; Bomber Sortie ; To Autumn, H. W. Harding 270

What shall the Poet Write ? Mary Brent Whiteside 271

Fragment of a Heroick Poem, John Manifold 275

Autumn in War-time, Raynor D. Chapman 276

Humbert Wolfe, Athalie Bushnell 277

November 2nd, All Souls' Day, Barbara Bingley 283

December Waking, Margaret Gregson ; *The Shepherd,* Cynthia Palmer 284

Return to Poetry : A survey of the work of Lady Margaret Sackville, Dallas Kenmare 285

More Poems from the Forces : *Pastoral,* Gunner J. M. Worth ; *The Pattern and the Moment,* Iain Fletcher, M.E.F. ; *To Keats,* C. C. Gould, A.N. ; *When Peace Comes,* J. F. J. Gregory, R.A.C. ; *To a Country Child,* Raymond Tong, R.A.F. ; *Life is a Lonely Afternoon,* T. W. Wicks, R.A.M.C. ; *Farewell, Apple Blossom,* Clive Bayliss, Mil. Attache ; *To Ralph,* J. F. N. Wedge, R.N. ; *A Soldier's Soliloquy,* J. L. Cranmer-Byng, B.N.A.F. ; *Ad Astra,* D. Momber, W.R.N.S. ; *The Party of Afif Bulos,* John S. Waller, R.A.S.C. ; *Alamein,* Capt. J. Alan Thompson, R.M. ; *Steel Cathedrals,* D. van den Bogaerde, Queen's ; *One Generation to Another,* Capt. M. Lindsay ; *Benedictus Fructus,* Peter Inwood, R.A.F. ; *While Scenes are Changed,* Trooper John T. Kirk ; *Troopship,* George Price, R.A.F. ; *When I Die,* Alan Scott, R.A. ; *Dawn,* A. Lovell, V.A.D. ; *Janet,* F. M. Queminet, R.A.S.C. 291, *et seq.*

Dynamics of American Poetry, XCIX, Alice Hunt Bartlett 302

Poets and Pretenders : A Survey of Poetic Expressions 305

Correspondence : Poetry Doesn't Sell, A. Francon Williams ; The "Unpopularity" of Robert Bridges, H. C. Clough ; "Prose Poems," W. R. Dennett-Morgan ; Critics of Reviewers, Herbert Palmer ; The Poet and the New Era, Arthur Rowe, M. A. H. Hobbiss ; The Pursuit of a Mirage, L. Cranmer-Byng 315, *et seq.*

The Premium Editor's Report : The Greenwood Prize 323

Time's Eclipse, Leslie Greene 326

After the Siren, Gladys Ward 326

The Vocal Interpretation of Poetry : Conference Report 327

It will be Strange, Cecil G. Taylor 336

Reports and Announcements ii, xi, etc.

Verse-Speaking Examinations : New Test Pieces v

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PENDLE HILL*

RAIN as we journeyed eastwards : thongs of rain
twitching the branches and obedient grain :
rain merged with far-off hills and hanging sky
as though the uncoloured morning wished to die,
and drowned were mornings of the runaway gold
when shining birds were waking from the field.

From the tram bridge to castled Clitheroe,
moving against the slatey Ribble's flow,
I crossed the county from the urgent mills,
came to the village leaning on the hills,
and in the rain surveyed the high tor, where
the long clouds battled, smoky ghosts at war.
Rain on the beaten meadows : and flushing streams
plunged down the hill with only sullen beams,
where white cloud reflected and the grey cloud thinned.
Rain, and the scolding virago of wind !

Vision became feline, and had no sense
to distinguish colours, and guessed a permanence
in hammering rain over the pewter sky,
where startled or safety-seeking birds would fly.
Yet at the cross-roads where no unguarded sun
seeped through the cloud, suddenly the run
of rain and lashing weather faltered and stopped :
the hard wind, like a wrestler, sighed and dropped,
and desolate Pendle showed its shape and size,
too large for trees, and neighbour to the skies,
and shouldering up the high slopes, tattered as smoke,
the cloud charged wildly to the summit, broke
like grimy light against the sly crosswind,
and dwindled on the helpless reaches of the land.
Solid in rain, Pendle was stark and gave
no lure of beauty for the mind to rove,
and in its bald confusion helped no mind
to dare the climbing stairway of the wind.

Past well, past flicking leaves and birds that darted
from low drenched hedgerows where the desolated
plants hung in rain and branches twitched like nerves,
and fell like wing-clipped birds the broken leaves,
we climbed slow country up to the windy inn,
seeing no soul, having no chance to begin
the tinkling conversation by the road ;
past blinded fields, and where the river flowed
its first excitement down between the rocks :
past stationary and disinterested flocks,
seeing in the distance the white farmhouse,
the thinking horses and the wondering cows.

*See Mr. Herbert Palmer's remarks, page 216.

As the swift slope approached against our walking,
with no thought but dark and no desire for talking,
we came across the roadway to the gate
where in their parliament some old sheep sat,
watching us with weather-haunted eyes,
sodden as land and smileless as the skies.
They winced, and on the furious moorland called
repeatedly against the drumming cold,
and huddled on the banks, and did not run
for shelter, but waited for the kindness of the sun,
and edged away from us with certain feet,
to pause and gaze, complain in listless bleat.

The road twitched over a moorland with no trees,
a white line linking up the villages,
and here was desolation wearied by the rain,
that sometimes faltered but resurged again.
And there you left me, going your own way,
into the rain that beat in tides like sea.

I struck off from the road, and over the springing slopes
the hilltop altered to many rounded shapes,
as cloud and walls of rain were emptied over
the summit and commencement of the river.
On lesser heights—the slow road from the town—
clouds kept aloof, or only like strings flicked down :
but on the high-top in the windy cold
the clouds in idiot fury poured and rolled . . .

Down from the first hill slopes, across the break
where water fumed and lifted reeds to make
a white line drawn like milk along the grass :
down from the dropping slope and slate to pass
the grey and big-holed barn, and down to go
across the wooden fence that sagged too low,
so that the water as I crossed the rails
giggled about my feet and moved in pools.

Over, with water sharp about my feet,
scared abruptly at a grey tup's bleat,
I began the final climb of hill, now turning
a moment to see the stacks where fires were burning,
and people by windows were angry at the rain.
Horses, steady as fields in a lower lane,
nosed each other beneath the rolling trees
as rain surged downwards like suspended seas.
I saw this accurate and sharp, and turned to climb
the steeper hill, forgetting weather and time
in the attempt, in the strain of going
against the ground, the pushing wind, the blowing . . . .

PENDLE HILL

Bracken on the first slopes hung with wet,
and as the summit vanished and the light
faltered in cloud like smoke, the way became
lost by the fern and barriered by the stream,
and rain defended the hill, and arrows of wind,
and the oozing underfoot treachery of the land.

But tearing through the fern and undergrowth
away from direction, lost to the guiding path,
I saw in snatches as through a smoky window
the far-off safety of a casual meadow
with clouds slipping across in lively shadow.
I pushed into slope and weather, wet and cold,
and still the sheep were mourning, growing old
in desperate hardihood with no sun to ease
old bones until the summer-sleeping peace :
still the wind chimed and the clouds lowered,
and nowhere was the hillside coloured or flowered . . .

Walls across the way in the clouded light
bent my pathway, and the occasional sight
of distance in the twilit mid-day showed
where I had bridged the river, left the road :
now, tongues of cloud wetted the grass and stone,
and suddenly like silence I was alone.

Over or through the gangling walls that had no gate
the climb was treacherous with fields of slate,
a murky pavement in the slippery mist
making direction veer like water, twist
along the easier stones, the flat-footed way,
that turned me like a weathercock at play.
And climbing past bracken, bulrush, rock,
disturbing sheep and sometimes an exiled lark,
I reached the heady summit but was shut
in clouds like solid walls that lengthened out
as I splashed among the peaty ground and tried
to probe with sight the woolly countryside.
Cloud settled clothlike : still the deadening rain
drove everything to grey that should be green,
closed everything in a house of wind and wet
where no noise moved except the bubble of peat,
as walking, I pressed the water out like blood :
no noise but peat and rain, no earth but mud.

Sheep watched : huddled in pairs among reedy grass,
bitter and beaten : ignored or watched me pass,
seeking the view point place where I might look down
on the industrial valley, the castled town.
I blundered through water-holes, through swamp and mire,

past the last wreckage of a camper's fire,
into the teeth of wind hungry and wild
across the high expanse of soggy field . . .

This was the witches' hill, Pendle, where once
in moon at half-mast or during bannered moons
the knowledgeable old women stacked their fires,
gathering like water from the adjacent shires
to hoist their hearts with the abandoned dance,
the throaty bottles of the goatish wines,
the nude hysteria and the wind-whipped prayer
that frightened like time the dark and shivering air—
this was the witches' hill, that the winds hate,
bereft of witchery, blind and desolate.

Soaked, I dropped down to the valley road,
past rock, past bracken and where river flowed,
out of the high and smoky world, into
valleys where rain was calmer, though winds blew :
a different path across the dips and hills,
a farmhouse, a stark tree on the fells,
walking by unheeding horses, calves that stood
and watched me pass, shouldering the wind,
until back to the slower roadway I returned,
to where surprising inn-fires blinked and burned,
I hurried, drying in the wind, and came
to the village with almost the hill's own name,
where the river swept through the street and sang
not of the nourishing rain, but sun and spring :
and in the tavern, I drank awhile and sat
against the fire that cheered me as I ate.

In afternoon sun shone. The clouds flew high.
Pendle stood half-way up the lighter sky,
and knowing way and system I climbed again
into the crystal wind that had no rain,
and saw below the churches in the trees,
roadways that curled to touch the villages,
and wandering past the gaunt unbroken walls
that stretched like twisted string among the hills,
I gained the exultation that the morning held
away, clear aspect of the valley field.
Through lanes and streets of slate I walked, and where
pheasants sprang in fear, and larks in the upper air
sang with no discrimination, but with fire.
Below, the castle gleamed : and stream and spire
hung in a level island lit by sun,
fields shook wild tresses of their new-washed grain,
and windswept Pendle was lord over fertile land,
with massive vision dropping on either hand.

PENDLE HILL

The fork of river, white from the land below,
spumed from the hillside spray as brief as snow,
blown back uphill against the running stream
as water fell from rock, blowing like steam
in scattering gusts over the hilltop peat,
where no sheep came to dare the wet and bleat.
The river's sheltered fork foamed quick as light
and drew a lightning mark downhill, in white,
bubbling in infant sprays, bright waterfalls
fed through the mouths of rocks that fed through wells,
new bubbled water shining in its race
down to where its roots will seem as lace ;
white line sliding down the slate-hooded hill,
ironed out at the dead stream of the mill.
Here, on the height, the loose walls are knocked down,
by sheep or weather or the boys from town,
who spend their idle Sundays tossing rocks
among the slate heaps or at pestered flocks.

Some have rebuilt a fallen stack, or made
no continuous wall, but a landmark on the side
where no lace river catches on the stone,
have raised a column for no reason they have known
far from the sagging strings of old stone walls . . .
The skyline takes it, and the whole hill falls . . .

I saw the patchwork valley, felt the sky :
but thought had climbed to height, but did not fly
despite the blurs of cloud below, the head-high birds,
and the toy cattle in their tidy herds.
I did not fly : beneath my earthen hands
was anchored the hill with all her tearing winds.

Corporal, R.A.F. HERBERT CORBY.

"COMMUNIQUE FROM RUSSIAN H.Q."

STILL is the night
below the ravaged Russian plain :
still is the rain
falling, and God lost from sight.

Still are the stars
there in the sky : set we their fire
high on the spire
of silence, above all wars.

God is not mocked
nor from torn Side the power gone.
For on this rock
children shall blossom from our bone.

MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

Three Sonnets by H. W. HARDING :

TO AN EMBANKMENT SUICIDE

Dumb witness to unutterable things
Hide now your face lest Death, intruding, tell
Too grim a tale where sounds no organ swell
And no robed choir a requiescat sings.
To the shocked sight of Men the ebb-tide brings
Your clay in answer to the strident knell—
The traffic roar of what was long your hell
But which your soul has fled on pity's wings.
Deep in the tidal ooze your face is pressed
In last surrender, helpless arms flung wide
As though you strained against a Mother's breast
And sought in love's oblivion to hide
The wounds that no Samaritan has dressed,
Whose silent challenge mocks a nation's pride.

BOMBER SORTIE

Dusk deepens like some reverie of night,
Dim grows the west before Moon's swollen face
Puffed up with pride to cast the borrowed grace
That so befits a bankrupt satellite.
From nether deeps spring ghost rays that re-light
No sunset fires but lose themselves in space
Yet, as they pass, in pearl on sapphire trace
Death's moaning squadrons in relentless flight.
O, Lord Machine, what is to you the star
You cannot see but which your pinions hide ?
Yet in your robot heart my brothers are,
Sworn to protect you, who by stars will guide
Your fatal menace to its avatar—
The triumph and defeat of human pride.

TO AUTUMN

Grant me the fortitude that holds the tree
Erect and still in this September air,
That makes the rose against the wall as fair
As if no frost prepared for victory.
Let me not clutch at time, eluding me
With ever swifter foot, so I may care
As little as my borders glowing there,
Plagued by no future but content to be.
What is my purpose, why this heart and brain
And yet so little beauty, why desire
That tempts no rose but grieves me with its pain ?
This hopeless ash of ineffectual fire
Which yet renews its warmth that, once again,
I may forget and with my soul admire.

WHAT SHALL THE POET WRITE?

IT may well be that no poet now living would be capable of creating the cosmic epic that must eventually result from the present titanic conflict. Here we might find ourselves echoing Wordsworth's familiar apostrophe to an earlier master: "Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour."

Yet the ultimate and immortal epic of the global war will be in the tradition neither of Milton nor of Dante. There may conceivably be in it more of Homer than of the Christian poets; a voice freed from the restraint of dogma and of nationalism, yet one, paradoxically, capable of encompassing the colossal problems of all creeds and all races; possessing in other words, what our own century delights in calling a "social conscience." Beyond this, an anointed prophet alone could venture to foretell its character or its design. We know only that the creator of the future epic will have at his command an overwhelming wealth of material of which those of earlier centuries had no conception.

In the meantime the comment has been made that the best poems so far inspired by the present war have been poems of peace; which is to say that the poet, in common with the rest of mankind, is inclined to turn his attention away from the present toward a happier time ahead. The tendency it may be is an instinctive rather than a reasoned one, but where it becomes mere escapism it is justifiable in the poet only to the extent that it is justifiable in other men. The challenge to the creative spirit is a colossal challenge, since such a spirit should remain as always a "light against the dark," although the prophets themselves have been known to have their moments of twilight and despair. Yet—to give the thought an immediate and realistic application—even the dim-out in the city streets may offer the poetic mind a rewarding discovery. The glory of the crescent moon above the *unlighted* park is an unforgettable experience. It is to see the moon with new eyes; to see it naked, alone, and poignantly significant. Here to be sure is no epic theme, but it is one for an immortal lyric that might become a treasure of the soul equally with the familiar song "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," and almost equally with Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar."

Punctually the evening star returns and whether in the "slow magnificence of Jupiter" or with the blue overtones of Venus:

> Here are some things the arch destroyers will forever miss;
> They cannot touch, they cannot shatter this.

The problems involved by a score of battlefronts are too immediate and overwhelming to present an adequate perspective. Where a single world-shaking event makes an almost shattering impact upon the poet's consciousness, lines of emotional intensity may result that will at least serve the purpose of the moment. They may or they may *not* contain poetry that will live; they will have fulfilled their destiny if they bring comfort to some stricken heart or reassurance to some humble soldier in the ranks that the sacrifice that he is making is duly recognised and will not go unrecorded. It may be that the soldier in question is merely one of the multitude of "little people," but if so, he is of that company who shall eventually inherit the earth. A poem from America contains the lines:

> Their strength is the rock we are founded on,
> And had it not been for these,
> We never should have had Washington,
> Nor Greece have had Pericles.

Their name is legion and they press doggedly on under the banners of all the United Nations, whether over Southern Seas, across the Russian steppes or the hot sands of Africa. For all the young and ardent lives that have ended in Tunisia and in French West Africa, the lyric poet is, at the present moment, the earnest, if inadequate

spokesman, paving the way, whether consciously or unconsciously, for the great epic memorial of which these young lives will be the protagonist. Since this has been called the "Peoples' War," its ultimate interpreter must be one whose heart beats in unison with the common heart, and is not moved to eloquence solely by figures of exalted rank. In this again, will the epic of the future differ from those of the past. Nor does this mean to minimise the genius of our leaders. It was indeed one of their number, Madame Chiang Kai Shek, who coined the perfect phrase, in speaking with unforgettable intensity of "those unsung." The two words are a lyric tribute in themselves; a "light against the dark," in which the sensitive poet mind discovers that

Where the children starve in China,
Or a barefoot coolie falls,
Spent and broken and dying, under his smoking walls,
The world is too small to forget their pain;
Too narrow to live apart—
And the shadow of all their anguish
Lies darkly upon the heart.

The poet then has his place in a world at war; not because he is an ornament to such a world, but because he is a necessity. Yet, there has been apparently an increasing humility or sense of frustration among our poets, for "Colossal moves the hydra-headed war," and the lyric poet, through years of peace and tranquillity, has moved gently among lovely and more intimate things. He has been stirred by the phenomena of nature and of love. Death has perhaps touched him with a poignant immediacy, but if so it has been intimate and personal; charged as death is always charged with a mystery for which he must find his own interpretation, and to which he reacts according to his own emotional or spiritual make-up.

Now he sees civilisation at the crossroads and the world soul crucified. He is frustrated and bewildered, groping among the ruins of what had been his own small and secure universe. His sensitized nerves are viol strings, but how shall he set brutality to music or shape a song out of madness? The masters who have gone before challenge the poet of to-day, but his response is slow. The music that he hears amid the chaos of a planet, leaves him more than ever distrait, for it is replete with cacophonies; disordered and formless. Yet, nature as always has kept faith!

Is spring's return an answer or a call?
Bermuda fields are white with lilies still,
And foam white pear-trees crown a waiting hill.
Oh, fleet they are with their renewing coronal;
Beauty, that levies tribute and a price—
Beauty and Spring—and the eternal sacrifice.

Here, indeed, there is an escape into April, but it is that April of the soul that remains acutely aware of the cosmic suffering that precedes the spiritual victory of Spring. And it is this spirit, triumphing over temporary ruin and disaster, that summons the poet to forget his own profound wounds and to bring what healing strength he has to offer to assuage the wounds of his fellow men.

No one more than the poet, whether English or American, suffered in learning of the bombing of Canterbury. To him "The name is a remembered chime," but, beyond all material destruction, he searches out and finds eventually:

The secret of a shrine like this,
Where love, surviving hate and rage,
Shall guard an unseen heritage.

What shall the poet write in the midst of a world at war? The question becomes

a cry to high heaven and the answer must be found within his own consciousness, for it will never be found elsewhere.

Within the past few years we have realised with a shock of dismay that our once "wide, wide, world" is more than theoretically one of the smaller planets in the solar system. In the civilisation that is to be shaped out of much sacrifice and much suffering, we must inevitably be neighbours of all nations, irrespective of race or creed.

We have spoken glibly in the past of the arts as a "universal language"; so glibly that the phrase has become a cliché, and in the face of wholesale destruction of so much long cherished beauty it becomes a cliché tinged with irony. The cynic might venture so far as to call it a *dead* language, but if this were to find literal fulfilment we should revert to a dark age, deeper than any the world has known heretofore, for we are a self-conscious and sophisticated generation and we should confront such a contingency with open eyes, well aware of its appalling significance.

All the freedom-loving peoples of to-day pay homage to that immortal country of the Mediterranean for which Lord Byron gave his life, and his adored "Isles of Greece, Where burning Sappho loved and sung," have inspired several singers of to-day to passionate tributes. Adin Ballou's sonnet, "Mt. Olympus," which appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune,* contains lines worthy of the exalted theme:

Look down again, O cloudy Mount, in scorn
Of new barbarians and their marching hordes.
From your eternal summit once was borne
A mystic wrath that conquered Persian swords.
Look down, Olympus, that your gods may see
To-day's Leonidas and Thermopylae.

Here is an epic theme handled briefly in fourteen ringing lines; an epic theme indeed, but one that will form only a portion of that greater epic that awaits some master pen of the future.

With a shrunken earth we have the paradox of new horizons; names of cities, of peninsulas, and of islands, unfamiliar and unknown two infinite years ago, have become household words to-day. The flight of a few intrepid American soldiers who escaped from beleaguered Corregidor, will be a saga of the future that will rank with any four-starred legend of the remote past.

An island fortress in Manila Bay,
It was unlaurelled until yesterday.
Then—suddenly a starred and bright renown,
For men who raised our flag in that beleaguered land,
When bursting shells had brought it down;
Lifted the colours high and higher,
Under a hail of death and fire.
Now, on that island promontory,
Again shall fly Old Glory,
And the fortress stand.

When victory makes a shining end of war,
How great will be—Corregidor!

They are too many to dwell upon in detail—the place-names so recently unknown that are now written in letters of flame upon a multitude of hearts: Sidi Barrani, Alamein, Tobruk, Mateur, Benghazi and Bizerta, Casablanca even; all these on or near the Mediterranean shores, and in the Pacific, Guadacanal, Wake Island, Guam, Port Moresby, Timor, and many others have become living symbols of valour, whose very sound stirs the heart.

What then shall the poet write? Each one of these now familiar names is associated with stories of heroism beyond our easy-going, peacetime conception of courage; fortitude under hunger and suffering, and an initiative of which we had not believed the untried lads in our armed forces capable. Our foreign correspondents have written of these things already, with an eloquence of compression and restraint; written with reticence in regard to their own constant exposure to the fire of the enemy. Dramatic and vivid, their narratives are the very stuff of life. They are not poetry, but they are the substance of which poetry is made. Sometimes they have been called upon to sacrifice life itself and they have remained unlaurelled. Not for them have been the citations and the decorations that await the members of our armed forces for "conspicuous valour beyond the call of duty." How many mothers' hearts may have been warmed by a single poem written in tribute to such a correspondent:

To-day, he is the man against the sky,
Watching the drama of the worlds go by . . . .

Living life deeply, richly, he may drain
Its ultimate cup of sacrifice and pain.
Playing his role upon an epic stage;
Alert, resourceful, and forever young,
He has not gained his final heritage;
He is the hero yet unsung.

Here, it should be stated, that if the poet is to play a genuinely significant part in the world drama he must be a participant in it, not an observer only. This does not imply that he must necessarily bear arms or face an enemy in combat. But it does mean that he must be wounded a thousand times within his own secret heart; that he must bear vicariously the pain and danger of the lads who fall; daring with them the heights and enduring with them, the depths. Sensitive to every emotional impact, the sorrows of those bereft, will be his own sorrows; the prolonged agony of those who hear the words "missing in action" will be his agony. Yet of all these things he will write with reticence and restraint, avoiding over emphasis and sentimentality. He will seek a new simplicity and directness, and finally, strong in his faith in human kind, a faith fortified and renewed a thousand-fold by the heroic conduct of compatriots and allies alike, he may find his eventual answer to the baffling challenge:

Faith lives anew, and speech is touched with fire;
A common tongue of beauty and of will,
Is ours, who looked on earth, and yet aspire
Beyond the transient, to the ultimate still.

All the eternal things are shared with others;
Hunger and grief, and mystery of birth,
And we would know, at peace with all our brothers,
Who share the sun and stars above the earth;
From desert's edge, to proud cathedral dome,
The world, our country, where one land is home!

MARY BRENT WHITESIDE.

[Dr. M. B. Whiteside, D.Litt., LL.D., is one of the best known and most widely-read American poets and essayists; editor of the *Westminster Review* (Oglethorpe, University, Va.) and the *Southern Literary Magazine;* national lecturer on poetry, the drama and metaphysics; a Vice-President of The Poetry Society; winner of THE POETRY REVIEW ballad prize (100 dollars), 1925.]

FRAGMENT OF A HEROICK POEM

LEGS and the wench I sing : maid, mistress, wife,
The glory, interest and bane of life,
Charming in flight, in capture sweeter still,
Tender of flesh but adamant of will,
To every race, black, yellow, white or tan,
The launch, the voyage and the port of man.

Women, I swear upon a bachelor's word
Are most adorable when most absurd :
Chloris, whom silks most elegant adorn,
Her hair impeccable, her mouth well drawn,
Devoted to the clothes that wall her in
Appears a goddess simply in her skin :

Lyce's apparel stimulates no trade
In glamorous stockings, dresses subtly made ;
You'ld think she scorned such adventitious aid,
But not a hope ! Disrobed, she will be seen
Ill-stuffed, as like as not, or lank and lean.
The feeblest reason could not but suggest
The plainer form should be the better dressed.
If such a plan their fancy guided right
These would delight by day and those by night.

Leuconoe's too well read to be enjoyed
Save by appealing to her Führer, Freud ;
Approach her through the memory, not the senses,
"Repression has such hideous consequences."
She ponders that and when it's sunken in
She'll take you as she'ld take a medicine.

Lydia, with far less love than taste, I guess,
Chooses a lover who will match her dress,
And both are chosen though the thought's abstruse,
For show and decoration more than use ;
Shown to her friends till they can hardly smother
Envy of one and boredom with the other.

Bred to the standards of the public school
Camilla has for love but ridicule.
Handsome enough but tactless in attack
She slaps her male acquaintance on the back.
Alas ! Unless some mild effeminate soul
Weds her, contented with an inverse role,
I fear she'll die a maid as she began,
Unsexed as woman, unequipped as man.

Such they appear at distance : each apart
Has charms to stimulate the coldest heart.
We close our eyes their little faults to count
But when we see we cancel the amount.
Beware, young man who count yourself a killer,
A wench is not a mere detective thriller ;

So deeply are her motives intervolved
Her actions may be seen but never solved.
As the wild buffalo which newchums hunt
Is hid in flank when thought to be in front,
You boast the capture of a wench you've necked
But may be hers before you e'er suspect.
Think of the adder's tail and mark my words,
Man's brain is not much better than the bird's.
But if yourself with chains you *must* bedizen
(Old lags are seldom happy out of prison)
You'll have to learn without reflecting twice
To make a virtue out of every vice.
If she is prudish, vaunt her "modest mien,"
Talk of her "pretty wit," but know it spleen;
Tactlessness sounds far better in disguise
As "noble candour" or a "scorn of lies";
Immodesty is best called "innocence";
"Good-mannered" masks the hypocrite's pretence;
If to your anguished plea no ear she lends
Proclaim to all, "We are the best of friends."
Study, go forth and prosper, strive to learn
And bait the hook with what she cannot spurn.
Some fall for wit (if wit is what you lack,
Apply to us at half-a-crack a crack:
Even one owlish pedant whom we knew,
On amorous errand bent, to wit to woo,
Found that although for higher things unfit
He owed his liberty to woo to wit.)
Some fall for cash, some cars, artistic chat,
Politics, platonism, this or that.
But shun, O shun the vulgar faults! Beware
Of bandy legs, B.O. and shaggy hair!
Charm is in everybody's reach to-day,
The only thing you have to do is pay.
Thus well equipped you'll never have to sink
To plying her with brutal force and drink;
For, bear in mind this great consoling rule,
To every male there is a female fool.

JOHN MANIFOLD.

AUTUMN IN WAR-TIME

WHEN death had passed
With metalled scream,
I turned away
And caught the gleam
Of Autumn leaves
Whose smouldering hue
Showed death could come
With quiet, too.

RAYNOR D. CHAPMAN.

HUMBERT WOLFE

ONE of the characteristics which has distinguished the British nation and must have made an impression on foreigners in all ages is the hospitality shown to peoples of other lands. The British have always been willing and eager to help those less fortunate than themselves and ready to acknowledge and honour the names of those whose work shows genius in any sphere of life. Among the many men of Jewish race whom Britain is proud to claim as her own protégés is one Humbert Wolfe, a civil servant, now ranked among our national poets.

On January 5th, 1885, in the city of Milan, was born a certain Umberto Wolff. His mother, Consola, was a red-haired Italian from Piedmont in the north of Italy; his father, Martin Wolff, a German-Jew, was a native of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. Umberto was one of a family of five, so no one would have expected him to be a lonely child; but the two older children, Oswald and Fanny, were treated by their parents and neighbours as people of considerable importance, while the two youngest, Rita and Sylvia, were too small to be play-fellows and companions to Umberto, who was cast, a bewildered and lonely little boy, into the arms of a stern, unsympathetic world.

During Umberto's childhood the family lived at Bradford, where the lad grew up in an atmosphere of German-Jewish life, isolated to a large extent, from the essentially-English community of Bradford.

Of this lonely and unhappy childhood we are given a picture in the first of his autobiographies, *Now a Stranger,* which the author writes in the third person from an almost detached viewpoint: "When I contemplate," he says, "what this person Humbert Wolfe was or may have been when, as Berto Wolff, he lived in Bradford, I am as strange in his company as I would be if I tried to remember the inner life of Wyatt or Surrey."

The account of his pathetic childhood is written in such a simple unaffected style that it cannot fail to attract even those who find no great appeal in Wolfe's poetry; while the author appears to be so disinterested in the subject of his narrative that we may feel that here indeed is an unbiassed record of the mental sufferings of one of God's chosen flock.

When Berto—for so he was to all who knew him—was seven, the family spent a holiday at Arnside, a small seaside resort in Westmorland. The journey from Bradford was to Berto a great event—indeed, the Alps themselves could not have presented a more beautiful and thrilling spectacle to the lad's eyes than did "the straggling ribbon of road, carelessly tied by a slattern round the ankles of the Lovers' Knot."

But even such a holiday as that at Arnside, of which little was remembered by Humbert Wolfe, except the mingled delights and discomforts of Berto's donkey-rides and an attack of croup, came to an end and gave place to the normal life at No. 4 Mount Royd, Bradford.

Berto used to enjoy himself in winter by skating on the lawn of his neighbours, the Bronners. High above this frozen lawn were hung Chinese lanterns, which darted their shafts of light on the skaters, who "could almost feel the caress of stain-glass light on face and lifted hands," as did fair Madeleine on St. Agnes' Eve. In the summer the boy amused himself by playing cricket with his friends on forbidden ground—usually with dire consequences.

During the time spent at Mount Royd Berto was impressed by the people who were included in the circle of family acquaintance much more than by his surroundings or events going on around him. Wolfe has a gift for describing people—not offensively, but critically and vividly; a striking example is his impression of Miss Alberts, the German teacher at the preparatory school: she was "a small black American-cloth parcel of a woman—irreverently known as 'Black Judy'."

To his younger brother, Oswald, the eldest of the family, was an object of awe and admiration—the perfect specimen of English boyhood. But Berto—in spite of all his desperate efforts to appear a typical child of the land of his adoption—never succeeded in becoming anything but a plump, unpopular and rather timid little Jew-boy.

His first recollections of anything fringing the borders of literature were the German nursery-rhymes, some of them almost meaningless, sung to him by his mother, Consola, or, more frequently, by his German nurse, Clara—a slight, ugly woman, with a vehement passion for everything pertaining to her native land—who had a will of her own, which was frequently in conflict with that of the young mother. When Berto heard his sister Fanny reciting "a dear little girl sat under a tree, sewing as long as her eyes could see," enraptured, "he was a boy waiting, not as Wordsworth wrongly alleged, to put away his heritage of light, but to take it up with all its dangers, responsibilities and rewards"; and later, after reading his first book, *Jack and Floss*, he was indeed standing on the threshold of "No. 1, Knowledge"; the child had, through this first simple story, been given the freedom of the Woods of Westermaine.

Berto's first introduction to the schoolroom was with a nursery-governess, Miss Smith, who was continually reminding him that his two sisters—both considerably younger than himself—excelled him both in map drawing and in hand-writing, which, in spite of the boy's delight in the pen, always proved a stumbling-block. His next step into the world of letters was made under Mr. X, his tutor at the Grammar School. The boy was obedient and eager to learn but, to the great irritation of his tutor, occasionally fell into fits of extraordinary and seemingly-innocent stupidity. But Mr. X was getting good money, which was not to be scoffed at, and for this reason alone refrained from beating his pupil, attributing those irrelevant and often impudent lapses to the fact that the child was mentally defective.

One of the favourite excursions of the Wolff family—as of the majority of Manningham's citizens—was "to walk across the moors" to Rombald's Moor. The boy's greatest ambition at this time was to accomplish this journey, but it had always been considered too arduous and tiring for his constitution, and "it was therefore not till his seventh year that, on a cloudless and flawless day of June, he set out with the rest on the Golden Journey to Samarkand"; and even then, "Oswald, like Flecker's pessimists, did not fail to warn the boy of the manifold dangers of the enterprise." It was on the morning of this momentous occasion that, while looking out of the window, the future Humbert Wolfe composed his first poem:

> It was blue, blue, blue,
> And I hardly knew
> What to do.

The excursion, though exacting more of the boy's strength than was comfortable for him, was accomplished with success; but here Berto suffered his first experience of real Jew-baiting, when a farmer approached the two brothers, showing them a young thrush which he had killed and asking them if they would like to stuff it; Berto looked at his hero-brother and said "Why don't you lick him?" The offended and now malevolent oaf advanced only to be confronted by the inimitable Consola, who, "always a red-haired Amazon, at such moments was all Cleopatra." The farmer retreated under her gaze, crying "Oo killed Christ?"

In young Berto the Jewish Sunday School in Lumm Lane and the Synagogue in Bowland Street excited no religious enthusiasm; indeed, the only emotion that stirred in the child's heart was a keen desire to be allowed to wear a praying-shawl or Taled, assumed on the thirteenth birthday—a ceremonial rite, corresponding to the English Confirmation.

The Hebrew service only puzzled the lad, while the sermons of Dr. S., the Rabbi, frankly bored him. Berto himself, and he believed that he was no exception among the Bradford Jews, felt desperately ashamed of his Judaism : within himself the child argued that his fellow-countrymen, out of courtesy to the land of their adoption, adhered to all other customs of the English ; and therefore, was it not in bad taste still to follow their own religion ? His sense of shame and his desperate longing to be like other English boys were intensified on Saturday mornings when he and his parents wended their way to the Synagogue, and on Sunday when he used to watch the procession of worshippers making their way to church or chapel. On these Sunday mornings when the rest of Bradford was at church, he and his schoolmates crept along —objects of derision to the urchins—to the school behind the Synagogue.

When Berto went to Bradford Grammar School he was again handicapped by the very fact of his nationality, even his unfortunate name, "Umberto Wolff," called forth laughter from his schoolmates. The school prayers intrigued him ; never before had he heard words like these ending "For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen," which brought horrified blushes to the cheeks of the young Jew.

At school Berto rapidly made enemies, branding himself as both a sneak and a swat ; but the boy remained blissfully ignorant of his unpopularity until one day his whole world collapsed when a schoolfellow, Murgatroyd, said to him, "I don't see why the boys loathe you so. You're not such a bad kid."

While Berto was at the Grammar School he acquired a deep admiration for one of the masters, Mr. Rendell, who took an interest in the child because he felt sorry for him and also because he was interested in watching the progress of unusual children.

As Berto's position in the school advanced, his father's health became steadily worse : Martin Wolff was slowly and painfully dying of angina pectoris, but this had no great effect on Berto, for he had had little contact with his father and was able to conjure up no great sorrow at his death.

Some years later, flushed and inky, Berto burst into the drawing-room at 4 Oak Mount—whither the family had moved when he was ten—and proceeded to read to Consola his first poem ever entrusted to paper :

> Vintagers over the hill
> that turns up a cheek to the height,
> I can hear your gladness still
> as I pass away from your sight.

In this appears a characteristic which is marked throughout Humbert Wolfe's poetry, the absence of capital letters at the beginning of lines, giving a sense of timelessness and suggesting the futility of lines and grammatical punctuation in poetry.

The second phase of his education, the years spent at Wadham College, Oxford, is described in *The Upward Anguish*, the second of Wolfe's autobiographies. At the age of seventeen he travelled to Oxford to sit for an entrance scholarship to Wadham. During the train journey Wolff chanced on two public-school boys who aroused awe and admiration in the heart of the Grammar School boy, who was anxious to make a good impression on his idols, but the impression which he succeeded in making was not the one he had hoped to make.

On arrival at Oxford Wolff was met by Henry Clay, a scholar of University College. As they drove from the station "what appeared to be his first college hove into sight. He experienced all the thrill that he had anticipated. It was old, battlemented, made of rubble-stone, with little slits for windows and a dark gate. It was to him the perfect type of all that Bradford lacked. Here was the beginning of that secret of Oxford which none could utter. The first, the far, the still dim veil was

lifting. 'What college is that?' he asked, with the casual air of one who has collected colleges, like stamps, for years, and had for an instant forgotten the name of one of his rarer specimens. 'That,' replied Clay, 'is the Oxford gaol'."

The first two of the scholarship examinations were very stiff and Wolff became quite resigned to the fate of "trying again next year." But his name appeared in the list of thirty candidates selected for the Viva on the third day. The examination over, Wolff returned to 4 Oak Mount, where he had to wait a week for the results. One evening he returned home to find Consola on the doorstep with a telegram in her hand: he had won a scholarship to Wadham.

During a holiday at Inveraray, Wolff began to feel more acutely his leaning towards the Christian religion and, although he did not permit himself to go so far as to be confirmed into the Church of England, he frequently attended evening service.

At Oxford, Wolff spent a pleasant time; his work, although he was admittedly a swat, never troubled him, for he was naturally clever. He was not forced to do anything against his will. And he made just enough friends to keep him from being lonely; among these was a certain A. D. Keith, who had a great influence on Wolff's life at Oxford. Another undergraduate contemporary of Wolff's was John Flecker, a poet of Trinity College, who had re-christened himself James. The two became firm friends. Flecker was at that time determined to be "a philosopher, novelist, politician, man of the world, playwright and poet all in one," but in his short life only the last of these ambitions was attained. As poet to poet, these two had many interesting conversations and Flecker, after criticizing the as-yet-unknown poetry of Wolff, advised him to read Verlaine.

Another poet and author then being acclaimed in London as well as Oxford with whom Wolff became acquainted was Compton Mackenzie, who had just come down from Magdalen.

Wolff hoped to meet Rupert Brooke when he went to spend a week-end with a friend at Cambridge, who had promised to introduce him to the man who was "as beautiful and lonely as a cloud, and thought to be a better poet even than Flecker." But it was not to be; their meeting did not take place until two years later, when Wolff was passed over by Brooke as "a dull Civil Servant."

While at Oxford Wolff joined the Oxford University Volunteers and he himself says that, after his first camp, he "was the only private left in the battalion and that the competition among lance-corporals to command him had to be seen to be believed." Wolff seems to have found difficulty in erecting his tent and also in cleaning boots, buttons and belts. The latter of these two difficulties was overcome, however, by the presence of a kindly sergeant in the Scots Guards encamped in the next field who, for a small sum, cleaned Wolff's boots every evening. On developing a sore throat Wolff applied for permission to leave camp early; this was granted with surprising alacrity and the following term he resigned from the Volunteers.

Wolff's political début at Oxford was certainly neither awe-inspiring nor auspicious but, after several unconvincing attempts at speech-making, he gained confidence and was elected Secretary and Wadham representative on the Union Committee. A budding politician and poet then making a name for himself at Oxford whom Wolff met was Julian Grenfell of Balliol College, who was so soon to write "Into Battle" before he himself fell.

At the end of his Oxford career Wolff, together with a number of his friends, decided to enter the Civil Service and did so in 1908. Ten years later he became Deputy-Secretary to the Ministry of Labour. His career in the Civil Service, though a satisfactory and hardworking one, was not outstanding and is overshadowed by his

success as a poet, satirist and literary critic.

As a poet Wolfe stands by himself; he does not fall into any of the obvious categories; half-modern and half-conservative, his poetry is a curious mixture. There is a German strain running through most of his work, while it is reminiscent too of the French Symbolists—especially Ronsard, whom he has translated with considerable success, but without maintaining the clarity and lucidy of the original. His poetry savours too of Swinburne and Browning, but as a whole it stands out as the work of an individualist.

Wolfe's first works attracted no great attention: many of them deal with the treatment of the Jews by the tradesmen and the middle-classes. One of the most striking of these is "The Fried Fish Shop," with the subtly wistful wit of its last lines:

. . . . . when you stands
Clappin' your stummick with your empty 'ands
And thinking gently of a wooden box,
Where they will lay you at the parish charge
Straight if you're small and doubled if you're large.

The lampoons, which began to make his name, are critical and strikingly satirical; of G. K. Chesterton he writes:

Here lies Mr. Chesterton
who to Heaven might have gone
but didn't when he heard the news
that the place was run by Jews.

But his serious epitaphs are expressions of profound beauty; Wolff is either very satirical and worldly or else serious and wholly pleasing as in his lovely epitphe on Flecker:

You have made the Golden Journey—Samarkand
Is all about you, Flecker, and where you lie
How youth and her beauty perish in the sand
They are singing in the Caravanserai.

In 1924 *Kensington Gardens* was published—a collection of short poems, most of them singularly beautiful; here as throughout his poetry the use of assonance false rhyme and consonantal effects are strikingly effective:

Laburnum hangs — In the silken
her golden fleece — flosses caught
through a thousand — struggles spring,
lattices. — the Argonaut.

For very style and attractive use of words, "The Uncourageous Violet" stands out as a pleasing example of playing with words; the delightfully fantastic and flowery verse:

Would daffodil the spring desert
because her golden ballet-skirt,
poised on a slim green-stockinged toe,
with the first pirouette, must go?

reminds us of the romantic poetry of Keats, and especially of "Here are sweet peas on tiptoe for a flight."

In 1926 the publication of two satirical works *Humoresque* and *News of the Devil*, brought considerable fame to their author. But in the following year Humbert Wolfe secured his first real triumph with *Requiem*, which takes the points of view of the "Losers" and the "Winners" in life's great game. "The Soldier" is very appropriate in the present time, with its beautiful ending:

I wield the sword : and though I ask naught else
of God, I pray to Him : "But these were boys,
and died, Be gentle, God, to soldiers."

The beauty that lies in the presentation of these, the "Losers," is chiefly in the depth of feeling and meaning, as in the "Huckster" :

There were thirteen that ate together, drinking
strange wine, and biting on a perilous bread.
And one was speaking, and the rest were thinking
more of his eyes than of the things he said.

The "Winners" are, strangely enough, not nearly so interesting as the "Losers." But "The Uncommon Man" is rather striking :

The feathers in a fan
are not so frail as man ;
the green embosséd leaf
than man is no more brief.

with its final revelation : "and space is but a span of the long love of man."

Requiem created a sensation in the literary world : Wolfe became a best-seller and his poetry was in much demand. For some time he enjoyed attention and fame but, after a time, the literary public veered round and bestowed the same admiration and attention on the work of T. S. Eliot and his followers ; the *Waste Land* created a sensation equal to that Wolfe achieved with *Requiem.*

Three years later—in 1930—came the second of his triumphs, *The Uncelestial City,* which relates the adventures of the late Mr. Justice Crayfish when he reaches the gates of the City. In Book I, John Crayfish is discussing likely careers for his son, who is finally destined for law ; in Book II, Crayfish, having been disillusioned over his first love affair, makes a marriage suitable to his status ; in Book III, we are shown incidents in Crayfish's life ; his defence of a prostitute ; difficulties with his daughter ; his hearing of a case of blasphemy and his condemnation of the blasphemous poet, Stephen Jinks. "The Four-ball Match," included in this, is one of the most striking of all Wolfe's poems, with its queer mixture of blasphemy and allegory :

[God took a mashie,
laid the ball dead.
(keep on praying !)
"Game," God said.]

Book IV deals with the persons concerned when Crayfish condemns a murderer to death, and Book V, with the retort of Mrs. Jakes, the murderer's mother, who is also housekeeper to the poet, Stephen Jinks. In the Coda, Mr. Justice Crayfish, after traversing the whole Uncelestial City from youth to old age, is again at the gate surveying the Celestial City on the hill.

Wolfe's later works include the autobiographies already mentioned, *Now a Stranger* and *The Upward Anguish ;* a volume of personal reminiscences, *Portraits by Inference ;* a *Signpost to Poetry,* which is an introduction to the study of verse, and *X at Oberammergau,* a poem essentially religious, but treating its subject in a most unusual manner.

Early in 1940 Humbert Wolfe died, heart-broken after six months of war—the war that has followed that "war to end wars." With the passing of this revolutionary conservative—to employ an appropriate oxymoron—the world of letters has lost an individualist with whom no one of his own period can compare in phases of exquisite melancholy and pleasant humour, although, perhaps, the work of his contemporary, Siegfried Sassoon, may be singled out as having something in common with that of Wolfe.

The present literary age is as significant as any—possibly excluding the Elizabethan era—and posterity would decry us if we allowed the work of this man to sink into obscurity. We are in no danger of doing so, for Wolfe's work is in itself some of the most significant poetry of our day.

It is difficult to dissociate Wolfe from his poetry and easy to forget that many of his days were spent in the conscientious fulfilment of the duties of a highly-placed Civil Servant.

The University, St. Andrews. ATHALIE BUSHNELL.

NOVEMBER 2ND : ALL SOULS' DAY

WITH what grave tenderness the autumn trees
Lament the year in measured threnodies,
Enact with lifted boughs their ritual grief
In solemn gesture sorrowful and proud;
The South-West their Choregus chanting slow
With changeful voice—now softly lulled, now loud,
His age-long ordering of sigh and sway,
Which, like an antique chorus they obey,
Turned to an instrument whereon his breath
Can shape with music, or with movement blend
Fit harmonies to mourn the eternal end
Of life in death.

Thus time on time the trees with moving grace
Lay their bright colours by, and for a space
Observe the rite and sacrament of grief.
The elm, her yellow garments torn and rent
Weeps tears that fall with every falling leaf;
The poplar lights her taper, and unspent
That generous prodigal the chestnut brings
Her tarnished gold for funeral offerings.
O trees, compassionate and kind to man,
You celebrate not years, but all men dead;
For every aching heart since time began
Are your leaves shed.

Therefore let those who darkly mourn put by
Tormented thoughts and worthless misery,
Nor let them seek when lovely life is done
To raise great monuments, nor write with tears
Laborious odes, nor dirges sing, for none
By these endure to cheat forgetful years.
The hearts they loved shall evermore remain
Most nobly memoried when trees again
Perform their tragedy. Let sorrow sleep,
Unchanging earth shall every autumn keep
Commemorate all dear and vanished things—
Dead love . . . lost springs.

BARBARA BINGLEY.

DECEMBER WAKING

MORNINGS in December
When clouds hang grey and low,
One bird sings.
And he it is who tells me all the things I used to know,
But cannot quite remember—
For I learned them long ago.

Listen! He will tell,
Not of ordinary things—
Sidling feet and fluttering wings—
Courtship under milk-white skies.
Not for him the tender chatter of a thousand mating Springs.
Later on he will sing chorus in May's earthly Paradise,
But now he pipes alone,
Of beauty spirit blown,
From other worlds, beyond our ears and eyes.

Ah! He knows well
How all infinity lies
Poised in the moment between sleep and waking.
Through what immeasurable worlds his eager wings have flown,
Bright, lost dreams overtaking?

He is so wise—
How shall his little throat bring forth the wisdom that he knows?
Crying forlornly, in this darkened land,
Of summer gardens (when the blue dusk lingers),
Of April dawns that slide their silken fingers
Under the eyelids of a child in bed . . . .

Listen! Lie still—
Oh Memory, music-shaken!
How is it that you give back so much more than Time has taken?
That is a thing I shall not understand
Till I am dead.

MARGARET GREGSON.

THE SHEPHERD (LIBYA)

HE left his home a thousand miles
Away, yet every night in sleep
He hurried back to windswept hills
To herd and pen the golden sheep.
T'was thus he girdled half the world
Until the turmoil of the plain
Caught him and held him in the sand . . .
He will not leave his sheep again.
If there was drought before, now falls
For him the soft familiar rain,
If there was lack of bowed pine trees
He loafs now in a shadowed lane
Watching his sheep dogs range the hill.
Those well known things, he has them still.

CYNTHIA PALMER.

RETURN TO POETRY

A SURVEY OF THE WORK OF LADY MARGARET SACKVILLE

MOST of the poetry of the period "between the wars," as contemporary chroniclers like to call the years from 1918-1939, reflected only too clearly the serious malaise of the spirit, which was bound, eventually, to manifest itself in some vast external catastrophe. Poetry is a very true barometer of human affairs, because poets react to prevailing conditions as sensitively as a barometer or a seismograph to atmospheric and terrestrial disturbances, and record their reactions as faithfully. But they are not always aware of their responsibility. Conditions and their recorded reactions create a vicious circle : the conditions compelling the reactions and the reactions in turn encouraging the persistence of the conditions. This is easily seen in the events and the poetry of the twenty years following on the 1914-18 war. Conditions were bad ; the poets recorded their disgust and despair ; the record produced in turn a general attitude of despondency in the readers (also, perhaps, in a more obscure, one might say occult, manner—so little is understood of the creative and destructive power of thought and emotion), and the general atmosphere thus produced was bound to create still worse conditions, and so on and on, in a ceaselessly revolving train of calamity. It is conceivable that if, instead of succumbing to the evil conditions, the poets, while still faithfully recording their impressions, had pointed a way to salvation and healthful recovery the plunge into the final abyss of war might have been averted. The power of constructive thought has not yet been trusted and tried, while the effects of destructive thought are evident, and tragically observable on every hand.

One of the results of the materialistic age following on the "Darwinian revolution" has been a complete non-understanding of the nature and function of poetry, and no wonder, for poetry is concerned precisely with those elements materialism flouts and denies. In an attempt to bring it into line with modern thought an ugly hybrid, half prose, half inferior verse, has been produced by the so-called poets, who have rejected beauty and romance as "old-fashioned" and concentrated on the unpleasant aspects of life, with the excuse that such concentration alone is "realistic." Although an adequate and conclusive definition of poetry is mysteriously impossible (in itself a sufficient proof of the essentially mysterious nature of poetry), true poetry is unmistakable : there has to be a certain sense of "otherness," a transcendental *quality*, an impression of magical incantation, which is revealed in the turn of a phrase, the quality and texture of the words used, and in their ordering. This magic cannot be achieved at will, or ever learned, in the strict sense of the word, although, of course, the technique of verse writing can be studied (and could well be by many of the contemporary versifiers!). But finally, poetry is beyond analysis and derives from those very sources the modern materialists deny. And it must be remembered that until we return to a belief in those sources there can be no improvement in our state.

Latterly there have been many signs that the period of so-called realism is drawing to a close. It is evident that, as a result of the war, people are finding themselves compelled to question the values they have hitherto put their trust in. Something has gone seriously wrong, and the humanist Utopia, expected by the late and post-Victorians, has failed to materialise. So after all, some other way will have to be tried ; the negative way has produced exactly what the profounder thinkers always knew it must : disintegration and destruction. Perhaps, after all, the out-moded poets, with their idealistic notions and romantic phaseology, were nearer the truth than the materialists. At all events, there is nothing pleasant or desirable about the present age, which recalls only too vividly Raskolnikov's nightmare in *Crime and Punishment* :

> Never had men considered themselves so intellectual and so completely in possession of the truth . . never had they considered their decisions, their scientific conclusions, their moral convictions so infallible. Whole villages, whole towns and peoples went mad . . All were excited and did not understand one another. Each thought that he alone had the truth. They did not know how to judge and could not agree what to consider evil and what good ; they did not know whom to blame, whom to justify. Men killed each other in a sort of senseless spite . . There were conflagrations and famine. All men and all things were involved in destruction.

But the death-and-despair poets have had their day. It is, for example, significant and gratifying that so true a poet as Morwenna Donnelly has just been awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize for 1942 for her exquisite poem *Beauty for Ashes* (Routledge, 2s. 6d.), and to discover a new book of poems by Lady Margaret Sackville, a renowned English poet, who has bravely carried the torch of true poetry through all the fogs and miasmas of the Dark Age in literature now ending.

Many of the poems in *Return to Song* (Williams and Norgate, 1s. 6d.) are of the highest order, and all are alive with the essential spirit of poetry, as for example in the lines from the long poem "Scenes set for Happiness" :

> The hours like sea-gulls—sea-gulls in full flight—
> Scene set for happiness, for an hour that night
> Did you all flickered over with sun, with spray, with the quick darting drops of sunlit rain, alight ?
> Yet how could happiness, winged like a gull, remain ?
> Not twice the winged gull flies the same way again
> However bright the hour—however bright.

There is no need for the justification hinted at in the Dedication, concerning the repetition of certain words—(the misprint "work" for "words" is most unfortunate). Every poet, and sensitive reader of poetry, appreciates the effect this sort of repetition produces. In the hands of a genuine poet it can be extremely powerful and poignant, and so can the long, sweeping lines Lady Margaret refers to half apologetically. The imagined necessity for any sort of apology from so practised, mature and long-recognised a poet itself underlines and reproves the present state of understanding where poetry is concerned.

Lady Margaret's first book of poems was published in 1901 ; this was followed by *A Hymn to Dionysus* in 1905, *Lyrics* (1912), *Songs of Aphrodite* (1913), *The Pageant of War* (1916), *Selected Poems* (1919), and several other books, until in 1939 her *Collected Poems* appeared. In all her work there is a refinement, a delicacy and graciousness which this vulgar age of mediocrity and exaltation of the commonplace utterly lacks. Max Beerbohm in his Rede Lecture for 1943 remarks that :

> We are told on high authority, from both sides of the Atlantic, that the present century is to be the Century of the Common Man. We are all of us to go down on our knees and clasp our hands and raise our eyes and worship the Common Man. I am not a learned theologian, but I think I am right in saying that this religion has at least the hall-mark of novelty—has never before been propagated, even in the East, from which so many religions have sprung . . .

The result of this irrational new "worship" has been observable *ad nauseam* in modern "art," poetry, painting, sculpture, even music, where football matches and trains have been considered suitable material, and the passion for "debunking" (which Max Beerbohm rightly calls a vulgar term), so prevalent during the artistically threadbare 'thirties, was symptomatic. Nobility, of birth as of thought, elegance, courtesy and

greatness in any and every form had to be discounted and somehow proved worthless. This process was achieved mainly by a contemptuous, sneering attitude to all that was finest and noblest in human nature and in art[1], a total lack of generosity, in fact, by a loathsome Bolshevism of the spirit. Against this rude anarchism the gracious and lovely spirit of the genuine poet might seem powerless, and indeed there have been moments when the battle threatened to prove unequal and there was danger of victory for the enemy, yet bravely the voice of the Muse still sang, though intermittently, the same voice that long ago rang in the ears of Sappho, and so many hundreds of years later impelled this lovely descendant of Sappho's line to write in true Sapphic style :

Or ever the white dawn kissed the sea, I heard
In the orchard, under an apple-tree—
Oh, it was not voice of man nor song of bird,
But my very dream which sang to me.[2]

In many of Lady Margaret's earlier poems the voice of the great woman-poet of Lesbos echoes, and again and again the strange impression recurs that the spirit of one of the priestesses of ancient Greece is speaking through a modern English poet :

. . . I am woman, flesh,
Mortal and incomplete, wrought to endure
One life, to break at last under the weight
Of natural days, soft falling, as a pine
Grown old through many seasons yields at last
Beneath its burden of impalpable snow.
Yet Thou hast laid the weight of numberless lives
Upon me, and their grief Thou hast laid on me,
And understanding of the obscure beats
Of many thousand hearts . .
. . . . .
I live a thousand lives, and yet to live
One life—my own life ; that is denied me . .[3]

This is the fate not only of the Pythoness but perhaps of every poet. The same quality occurs in "The Lion-Goddess" and, in a sense, also in the fine poem "The Victim" :

Yea, I was caught up as by a wind
Irresistibly—flame was I, wind-driven
Ever swifter, ever swifter—on—on—on !
Overthrowing all barriers, over-leaping
In my exultation earth's last bounds ;
My whole life then was gathered in one word—
Shining forth suddenly like a new star . .
. . . . . .
Yea, 'twas my heart's quick beating which chose death—
And I must still remember (who have so loved)
Song and light and laughter and soft speech
Summer flashing through a mist of flowers,
Night and pale early morning and full-throated
Music, yet from these things avert mine eyes
For ever now . .

[1] There is a notable attempt in *Life and Letters To-day*, Spring, 1937, to 'debunk' *The Tempest* !
[2] *The Wooing of Dionysus.*
[3] *The Pythoness.*

"Syrinx," one of the best-known of all her poems, also exhales the very atmosphere of the sunlit woods of Greece, and terror of the Great God Pan. This is an exquisite poem, delicate, elusive and unearthly as Debussy's "L'Après midi d'un Faune," with which it seems to have an innate affinity :

I follow the white morning on swift feet ;
I slumber in the thicket at mid-noon ;
The racing wind bears me along with it.

And for the gods' delight, under the moon
I dance, dance and laugh to feel my hot
Heart leaping to the wild pipes' tune.

But as for Love, truly I know him not,
I have passionately turned my lips therefrom,
And from that fate the careless gods allot

To woman. Love who has taken the world by storm,
For all his fury of blind wind and flood,
Has had no power to change me or deform,

For the chill mountain-streams are in my blood,
And pale, phantasmal fires of dawn-twilight,
Shadow and dew are all my maidenhood.
. . . Once again I heard

That laughter, and saw, crouched there before me—Pan
The very shepherd and godhead of our hills
Whom I have feared more than the Cyprian ;

Since his is the sharp secret breath which kills
At nightfall, he is lord of death and birth,
And the year wanes and waxes as he wills . .
. . . . . .

Pan, Pan shall have at last the thing he craves,
Me : and my shadowy days must sink to naught,
Falling earthward like shed leaves when the wind raves.

Not all her poetry, however, is "beautiful" and "romantic" ; there are darker elements, as in "The Return" and "Prison," and especially the dialogue "War and Revolution," where War cries :

In spite of us, in all the earth
Has Freedom ever come to birth ?

and Revolution urges :

Tooth for tooth and eye for eye :
Stab, stab the world and watch it die

while the titular poem, *The Pageant of War,* published in 1916, successfully dispels any illusions about war's "glory" : the pageantry is a pageant of death, and the white road, so "starkly white" is white with the dust of trampled bones.

Then through the roar
Of trumpets, bugles, heralding his name
Came War—
Magnificently down the white road he came.

The sun was laughing through a golden haze,
And all the city
Shone ; it was the first of the Spring days.

But in the warm Spring light
The white road shone too white—too white
As though in some unnatural light.

The crowd's discordant voices shrilled his name,
Then fell, then ceased ; down the white road he came.

He was like Death sitting astride
A pale and neighing horse,
Only he swayed from side to side
Like one glutted in every sense ;
His lids were coarse
And overhanging eyes glassy with pride ;
There was no trace
Of laughter, tears or pity
In his blue veined, swollen face,
And so perforce
He had to wear a mask, lest seeing
The obscene countenance too near,
The heart of every human being
Should shrink in loathing and in fear,
And turn upon this thing and slay it there.

Then comes the description of the vast procession following him ; first "the pitiful, bright army of the dead," then the mourners, the women bereaved in war, then the "high-priests of War, crafty and keen," clasping their "bursting money-bags," wrapped in "tawdry, many-coloured flags," whose chief concern was "with the form and colour of War's mask" . . And the road they tread is white with the dust of trampled bones :

. . bones of children, bones of men,
Trampled in since the world began,
Road of triumph—road of glory !
This road conceived by men and then
Built from the ruins of man.
Road which every land has trod
Since the beginning of its story
And called in turn the road of God ;
Road of myriads vowed to rape,
Destruction, mutilation, wrath,
Since there was no escape
And this road their only path !

Perhaps only a woman-poet, feeling in her own bones and creative blood the pitiful tragedy and blasphemy of destruction, could have written the poignant lines :

The bones which make it are so light
(Childrens' bones weight very little),

and again, in the poem "Victory," it is essentially the woman who thinks :

Less of the frenzied shouts
Magnificent, of victory—of Spain,
Than of the smaller things which now can live ;
Of humble lives which now need not despair

Of old men basking in the sun ; of children's
Uninterrupted sleep ; their mothers baking
To-morrow's bread . .

. . . the accustomed pattern
Very simple, very comely re-begun . . .
. . . . .
The earthly-heavenly pattern clear once more
The ends disintegrated, broken, woven
Into the gay, kind pattern of every day.

Women, the guardians of life, could bring peace to the world and ensure it for ever were they fully aware of their true function, their responsibility, their privilege and their power.

Lady Margaret Sackville (who was, by the way, the first President of The Poetry Society) is clearly a comprehensive poet, concerned always to record her reactions with utter integrity, true to poetry itself, true to life. Her work is spontaneous, both "romantic" and "realistic." Sometimes her touch is thistle-down light, gay with thelaughter of nymphs and dryads and their human descendants; sometimes the poems sigh as a red rose might disturbed by the cool wind of September; sometimes the cry echoing in her words is simply the lost plaint of human passion and pain, and she understands, as only the born literary artist can, the true meaning and value of simplicity. The moderns, floundering in a morass of complexity and obscurity, in a belief that such involved diction alone conveys brilliance and profundity of thought, have been unaware of the great truth known to the initiates, that beyond complexity lies an utter simplicity, which is perhaps what Jesus was trying to make clear in the words about "becoming as little children." In the minute poem, "Swans," for example, the almost lost art of simplicity is exquisitely revealed:

As upon
This silent, deep
Water lie
Wild swans, asleep;

Float above
My heart's still lake
Dreams no word
Shall ever break.

She is so sensitively aware that no aspect of life is shirked. The true artist is always the true realist. In the days of peace which will follow on these grievous days of war, it would be wise to remember her poem "The Question," written "between the wars." It must be quoted in full:

The dead men spoke: "Is this your peace? Behold
We paid a heavy price, we brought you peace.
But this new world looks strangely like the old—
What of your promises?

So little changed! The old sad sequence still
Of hate begetting hate, compassion cowed,
Enfeebled pity, lacking faith and will
And Christ mocked by the crowd.

Was not our blood sufficient to redeem
The world from all these tears? We offered up
Our lives to save our sons. Now would it seem
They too must drain the cup.

Waste not your pity on our scattered dust,
We rest secure—but these, our blood, our flesh,
Our sons—we gave you all our sons in trust—
If you betray these living ones we must
By you, be slain afresh.

DALLAS KENMARE.

PASTORAL

BY little waters, brooks of twilight blue,
Where leaves swim in the silky trickles of the tide,
The herds of Pan come for the mountain's brew
Of peaty bubbles, dew and quietude;
Rubbing their hides upon the orchard's bark
To graze past litter, sow and cradled flower
Into the cool they wade, the greener dark,
Into the sleepy lap of summer's power.
I watched them as they came. How happy yet
To move within new thoughts where willows wash,
Awake or blushing in the sun; duet
For strings, a wrinkling ripple and a thrush.
Why sigh at beauty? Is it still surprise
Freely to bathe my fingers, cool my eyes.

If in this tense warm shade I thirst for you,
And stretch my hand into the tepid stream
Just to make motion company, make two
Of myself, that the loneliness may seem
Like a web stretched over a fairy bridge
To balm me with remote aspiring—
I surge to touch the fingers of the hedge
And climb upon the swallow's steady wing,
Now to entice my soul that love is here
In this cool, green bloom of youthful beauty;
Oh! hold me, lest I slip into this mere
Of chuckling water, limpidly mighty
To end this breath, this word I keep for you,
This pastoral, this little evening dew.

This is not I who whisper by the brook
And speed my minions to the opiate air,
For past the grove and up the heavens, look
Where clouds uncurl and bulge, and I am there
In the moving world, in the living heart
Of colour, star or mood—as swift, as old—
My fuller self, this greater I, a part
Of the vast deathless nature I behold.
Low in the teeming earth, a mortal lies
And moons of little waters, love, a tear,
To smile on cattle, peeping buds and sighs
Because a fly-drone dives about his air.
Oh! tiny, stupid world I touch the sun!
The mortal and immortal knit in one!

Gunner, R.A. JOHN M. WORTH.

THE PATTERN AND THE MOMENT

LEAN over with your hair
curved in a sober flame.
I do not know from where
to what dark way you came.
I only know the air
is gentle with your anme.

You are the sense of space
of exiles at the border,
remembrance of a face
assuming its grave bloom.
You are my dream of home
and my loving order.

Sudan, M.E.F. IAIN FLETCHER.

TO KEATS, 6-6-43

RECALLING first leaves falling much too young
And lying green before the summer has
Dried with his drouth the fingers of the grass ;
Before the autumn makes a tale among
The sisters of the forest, and has hung
A tawny burnish everywhere—a mass
Of beauty binding sleep—I think, alas !
That spring alone was yours, the rest unsung.

Resounding to the limits of the odes,
And echoing in the silver sonnets, are
One part of all you promise. May it be
That you control your lyre upon a star,
And love and sing, and sing eternally,
Housing with Homer and the admiring Gods ?

Australian Navy C. C. GOULD.

WHEN PEACE COMES

WHEN peace comes, following the sombre years,
And gradually moves to take her place,
With firm wings banishing the shadowed fears
From all the corners of our earthly space,
We shall expect in this new light to see
New world, as when the sun beyond the shore
Recalls the day in dawn, but differently,
In gold and purple never there before.
Anticipation finds no fret or foam
Upon the morning ocean of our time ;
It can foresee a summer's honeycomb
For all our winters, wander free to climb
Amidst the branches as the cedars grow
And see the tulips green in garden row.

L-Sgt., R.A.C. J. F. J. GREGORY.

TO A COUNTRY CHILD

YOUR beauty's growth amid such loveliness is easy.
Always these crystal streams
Run pure through meadow dreams
Of green and blue delight, through fancies ever busy
In the mind of a child.
Always your ripening joys beneath the sun and rain
Can grow unhindered into sunflower gladness,
As far from death and pain,
From war and money-madness,
As any golden beast or carefree nymph in the wild
And distant woods of Pan.

R.A.F. RAYMOND TONG.

"LIFE IS A LONELY AFTERNOON"

LIFE is a lonely afternoon
To spend with spectres in a busy street.
The living dead pass silent in defeat
And Reason dances to the sensual tune.

Lust gives a Judas kiss to Power,
And Beauty shrivels in the tumbril's shade.
The surest pleasures of a lonely maid
Make but a shelter of a fading hour.

God! That the Prophet's dream were true
And Faith with shuttered eyes could lead the way:
I'd spend each hungry night, each eager day,
To come at last, O Heart of Love, to you.

Cpl., R.A.M.C. THOMAS W. WICKS.

FAREWELL

(from the Norwegian of Nordahl Grieg)

SO pale you stood; the train pulled out,
The moments passed—
Both of us knew without a doubt
They were our last.

"It seemed as though we died that night,"
We both could write.
Yet, 'spite that death and that farewell
We're living—well.

The wound is healed and, unaware,
The heart sleeps on.
This grief most hard of all to bear:
Both pain and joy have gone!

Asst. Military Attaché, Stockholm. CLIVE BAYLISS.

APPLE BLOSSOM

(from the Danish of Ludvig Holstein)

WHITE apple blossom, lovely one!
Who gave thee such a happy glow?
I am betrothéd to the sun!

Who gave thee that fine crimson sheen
With which thy tender skin is dyed?
I am the sun's young springtime bride!

And blesséd by my bridegroom's kiss
I live beneath his breath alway
One short but happy springtime day.

And when his last warm gentle kiss
In the red sundown brushes me,
I sigh and whisper: I love thee!

Compose myself and, stooping down,
Let softly fall upon the grass
My blossoms white, my wedding gown—

Asst. Military Attaché, Stockholm. CLIVE BAYLISS.

TO RALPH

MUNICH time, and you eighteen.
I, a year less.
"I just want to fly"
You said—
"Not die—"
And we were quiet
In anxious contemplation.

For a year
You flew in peace
Each week-end.
Then Danzig came,
We changed our office suits
For blue,
Of different hues.

Two years, nine months
Have passed since then—
Norway, Poland,
Rhine—
Scharnhorst (our mutual friend)
Tirpitz, Brest—
You knew them all.
(Once a trawler picked you up
As you swam)—
And still you flew.

D.F.M.
(God! how you deserved it!)
A thin blue ring
Replaced the stripes.
You volunteered
To go abroad—
We joked about the snow
On Russian boots,
And bears.
Then one day, Malta!
You wrote—
"The country's grand
And bathing fine—"
(The B.B.C. filled in the gaps)
Soon
"M.E.F.
There's too much sand"
I read
"But the bathing's *grand*—"
(Tobruk was falling)

Still the battle rages
And you are there.
Oh, Ralph!
God bless.

Sub.-Lt., R.N. J. F. N. WEDGE.

A SOLDIER'S SOLILOQUY

IT'S quiet, very quiet, here in the olive groves,
With only the distant drone of a plane beyond [*censored*],
Or the ceaseless grinding of grasshoppers in the trees.
Even in the shimmering midday heat there's shade,
And often a sudden breeze, echoing a bugle's notes.
It's fresh when "reveille" sounds in the morning,
And the sun's weakly-bright.
It's cool in the evening when sudden night comes down
And we sit long at the supper-table under the African stars.
Then, only, the pattern of army life relaxes,
The forms, responsibilities and precedence slip off,
And we become our proper selves and talk of home.
It's generally nostalgic stuff—recalling memories of cricket
Played on the village green, with chestnut trees shading the boundary line,
And tea supplied by the Women's Club
With beer at "the local" after stumps were drawn.
Or perhaps someone describes a three-days' match,
Leisurely, exciting, always the unexpected happening,
With luncheon scores, and last wicket stands,
Brilliant catches, or stubborn batting,
Of giants bowled for a "duck," or novices carrying their bats.
Then come the meals we had while watching,
Salmon and mayonnaise, salad, strawberries and cream,
With cider, shandy, or simply English beer.
So we talk of willow trees, and shady fields and lawns,
Until "The Last Post" sounds, slowly with dignity,
Making us feel a moment greater than we are,
A real brotherhood of men.
The last long notes die away, the camp lights flicker out,
And we slip in beneath mosquito nets
To dream again of cricket, summer frocks, green yielding grass.
And England . . . . . .

Capt., Air-borne Div., B.N.A.F. — J. L. CRANMER-BYNG.

AD ASTRA

IN a wild flight into the lonely sky
You left the world for ever. Who can know
What supreme joy you felt where cloud-winds blow
Before you died alone, so far, so high.
You sought the stars through spaces none can fly,
The rushing winds about the sun. Through death
Who could not steal that last intensest breath
You reached the height where those bright stars slide by.
Below the dark sea swells, below the land
Lies in black shadows, and the wind and rain
Beat out an endless echo of lost pain
Beat through the darkness of perpetual night.
But you who won that far off star-lit strand
Live now secure amid immortal light.

W.R.N.S., Thurlestone. — D. MOMBER.

THE PARTY OF AFIF BULOS

(Jerusalem, November, 1942)

A LITTLE gladness at this time of year
makes merry and prevents a tear.

Gay faces whom I'll never meet
Come swaying by in silky feet.

Some on the floor play Chinese checquers ;
Others get drunk on different liquors.

The woodpecker song runs through my head
With memories of joys in bed.

Fearing at this end of the scale
The dishonest but adroit male

I dance with Gladys and try to forget
The war and love, but deeper than that—

O the old world is broken,
Its delights are past ;
The merriment of children
Heartens but cannot last.

R.A.S.C., M.E.F. JOHN S. WALLER.

ALAMEIN

HUDDLED beneath the ridge, he rested,
his veined and reddened eyes
closed against the clear night
unfolding like a fan across the sand,
His unknown victory as still
another fiery day of vicious sun
and winds that flung the desert in his face.
Distances dissolved in shade,
the brown horizon climbed into the sky,
the hard breast of the desert
rose and fell in sleep.

Then clearly he heard the bells
ringing over the restless sand,
and a small smile in the darkness
brushed the dust from his cracked lips.
Bells, over the fields and hedges chiming,
clamouring in narrow streets,
rousing the squares long silent in the cities ;
and singing in the ears of families
gathered in their darkened doorways,
the women with prayers beneath their breath.

Out of the sand
the bells are ringing
in the opened ears of the very young,

small fingers clutch in wonder,
wide eyes are turned to towers
and the silver music
coldly silent through their lives.

"They are bells, my little heart,
the bells of Alamein."

Soon he slept,
warmed by a strange comfort,
a dirty, bearded figure,
hunger stirring in his stomach,
jaw fallen on his chest;
and a low voice from an old country
whispered amongst his dreams.

"They are bells, my little heart,
the bells of Alamein."

Captain, R.M. J. Alan Thompson.

STEEL CATHEDRALS

IT seems to me, I spend my life in stations.
Going, coming, standing, waiting.
Paddington, Darlington, Shrewsbury, York.
I know them all most bitterly.
Dawn stations, with a steel light, and waxen figures.
Dust, stone, and clanking sounds, hiss of weary steam.
Night stations, shaded light, fading pools of colour.
Shadows and the shuffling of a million feet.
Khaki, blue, and bulky kitbags, rifles gleaming dull.
Metal sound of army boots, and smoker's coughs.
Titter of harlots in their silver foxes.
Cases, casks, and coffins, clanging of the trolleys.
Tea urns tarnished, and the greasy white of cups.
Dry buns, Woodbines, Picture Post and Penguins,
and the blaze of magazines.
Grinding sound of trains, and rattle of the platform gates.
Running feet and sudden shouts, clink of glasses from the buffet.
Smell of drains, tar, fish and chips and sweaty scent, honk of taxis,
and the gleam of cigarettes.
Iron pillars, cupulas of glass, girders messed by pigeons,
the lazy singing of a drunk.
Sailors going to Chatham, soldiers going to Crewe,
Aching bulk of kit and packs, tin hats swinging.
The station clock with staggering hands and callous face,
says twenty-five-to-nine,
A cigarette, a cup of tea, a bun,
and my train goes at ten.

Lieut., Queen's. D. Van den Bogaerde.

ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER

WE, in our time, were the clean high winds from Europe
that blew across the hopes of the baffled poor.
And we were each rising season's coloured climbings,
Summer loudly knocking the well-filled door.

In another time, we were Autumn's yellow treason,
the farmer counting his ears to find them good.
Yet we were always the dirk-cloaked, beggared conscience,
the laugh struck down in the throat by the bitter blood.

Always the hours have been weighed in the old men's hands,
and Scotland nourished over their final tears.
Thus, in our fathers' follies breathing strength,
the heart's weak treaties were welded unawares.

The bones of one generation say to another,
you shall search the path that once our pleadings taught;
and with only a slight, insignificant variation,
your grasp elude what shapes our fingers sought.

Capt., Cameronians. MAURICE LINDSAY.

BENEDICTUS FRUCTUS

DO you remember, son, those other happy days
When we were one co-mingled smile with smile,
Before they tore the flowers from our hill?

There was a box amid the rustling hays
The myrrh of sorrows in a monarch's phial;
Do you remember, son, those other happy days?

We closed our doors upon the winter chill
And strode the circling lanes a whistling mile
When we were one co-mingled smile with smile.

All mothers walk in dream, I sometimes still,
That never son would sacrifice his smile,
Before they tore the flowers from our hill.

They took their crown, their thorns, their waspish flays
And made them yours; and I must weep the while.
Do you remember, son, those other happy days?

I have done nothing, wherein lies my ill,
That they take you, with sword replace the style,
When we were one co-mingled smile with smile.

God in your heaven, was this then your will
To toy and pry, observe, and playing, smile
Before they tore the flowers from our hill.

Take you this message, son, that not a little while
Was Mary's grief, nor mine, before the Easter days:
Do you remember, son, those other happy days
Before they tore the flowers from our hill?

West Africa, R.A.F.

PETER INWOOD.

WHILE THE SCENES ARE CHANGED

Spoken as a prologue to two plays at Richmond's Aid-to-China Concert, August, 1943, by Renee Stant, who recently played an important part in the re-opening of the town's theatre, the second oldest in the country.

A WORLD'S gone mad about us since the night
Young Huang and I discussed the Soviet play.
We are become minutely small
Against the changing background of a day.
Our conversation was not born to die ;
Strong winds are still our servants but they fly
New merchants to the Indies, fling the song
Of Solomon Island lovers past New York
To reshape all our history in the dark.
I only know Huang never reached Pekin
And England is a home I hope to share
But times have altered both our travellings :
New paths to London pass through China's door
And Whitehall finger points the Pekin road.

Among the ranks the roughest joke is death
Before the final act begins
And in this foyer interval we laugh :
Remembering golden cuff links and our ease.

This is our Magi journey to the East :
Our pathway through the mountains of Tibet.
So swiftly does our world revolve that you
Who solve the Chinese puzzle over tea,
While players please, must learn to suffer yet
Because our comrades suffer. You may find
A story on the day a Sculptor moulds :
The China of your willow patterned mind.

Trooper, R.A.C. JOHN T. KIRK.

TROOPSHIP, MIDDLE EAST

NOT to Byzantium do we sail
With grey old men who fear each setting sun.
Too many years have they seen run,
Too many harvests fail,
That now each eager spray
Already withered lies—
Each muling infant cries
At what it hears Death say.
We spurn their company
Who choose insipid sleep
To rich uncertain life ; who weep
For what ne'er was nor ever yet shall be.

We do not seek sequestered paradise
As exile from the vicious pranks of Fate,
From Evil's warm embrace, the clasp of Hate,
And, under Error's lash, the whimpering cries
Of This, our World. We kiss each jagged tear
Ere we depart; each smooth sad cicatrice.
Here is our Home.
No shade—enpeopled peace,
No palace planned by ageless aurifer,
No fires faggotless, no months that Time
Would never grudge another lease of breath,
No fearless nights nor morrows free from death,
Could e'er replace the folly and the grime
Of human ways.
Here Youth to-day may fret,
But, battle-scarred, before the dawn, prevail;
Or through the long, dark night when Hope is pale,
With limbs entwined in love, may still forget.

Aye, wise old man, come conjure me the while,
Discover in your timeless artifice,
A miracle more wondrous than a kiss,
A monument immortal as a smile.

No—'tis not to Byzantium that we sail;
Rather Thermopylae to buy with blood
Life—with life, if that the price to meet.
Our pennon raised, more sacred than a grail,
A spray of deadly hemlock, still in bud,
A spray of Death, still growing—bitter, sweet.

Flying Officer, R.A.F. GEORGE PRICE.

WHEN I DIE . . .

WHEN I die—my dust to join the dust-rich dust,
I hope that God will just
Take half-a-pinch of me
And sprinkl' it on the deep, blue sea.
The other half—o'er the Downs and the Wye's cool trees
Please launch into the scented breeze—
Let my dried cells smoothly speed
In the last heat of a summer's airy race
With sweet winds warm, to take first place
With pollen and with tiny seed—
And let my soul flowers grow
With the flowers that I loved so;
Let my phantom, flitting feet
Dance all day with waltzing wheat . . .

God, grant me this! then gladly will I die—
Happy to live for Ever . . . 'neath the Sky . . .

Sergeant, R.A. ALAN SCOTT.

DAWN, FROM A MONTGOMERYSHIRE HOSTEL

CAN you, too, see the morn,
Or is it only I
Who watch the autumn'd hills
Yawn greyly on the sky ?
Who feel the wind's sharp kiss,
And straightway hear
A blackbird's call ;
The hill-farm stirring near ?
I cannot know henceforth
On what strange, barren way
Your steps are set,
Nor if you, too,
See glory in the day.
If by some open door
You stand in this dim hour,
And wonderingly perceive
The wakening of a flower.
Upon my full heart's questioning
The uncertain shadows close.
I turn as one who gropes in sleep
And into darkness goes.
Ah, see—it is the living room.
Each table, couch and chair
Marks intimate, domestic things
That we shall never share.

Can you, too, see the morn,
Now into fullness grown,
In warm resplendency,
Or do I watch alone ?

V.A.D., Wrexham. A. Lovell.

JANET

I HAVE seen your child,
your smothery bundle of smiles
and wiles,
with strong-soft kicking limbs
and marble toes ;
with curling clutching fingers
and wax-ball nose.

I've seen her laugh,
your snuffly something of chuckles
and suckles,
with lash-lined sky-blue eyes
and petal cheek ;
with round and wriggling rhythms
and forehead sleek.

I held her hand,
this dumply darling, all rimples
and dimples :
I touched her satin-soft hair
and gentle chin
and was glad, for her seedling-soul
of joy could sing.

Sergeant, R.A.S.C. F. M. Queminet.

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCIX

The *Primer For America* by Robert P. Tristram Coffin (Macmillan) is a collection of 135 ballads on what the publishers describe as "the art, the essence, the colour and glory of being American." Although I wrote at length about this distinguished American author in reviewing his two books in the November-December, 1942 issue of POETRY REVIEW, I shall quote the following biographic summary received from the publishers which tells, among other things, that Mr. Coffin was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford:

"Robert P. Tristram Coffin grew up on a Maine saltwater farm, went to a rural red-brick schoolhouse, to Bowdoin College, Princeton, and then to Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar just before and after his two years in World War I.

"He taught thirteen years at Wells, Aurora, New York, and is now back at Bowdoin as Pierce Professor of English.

"He is an authority on modern poetry, has lectured on it at Columbia, gave the Turnbull Memorial Lectures, New Poetry of New England, at the Johns Hopkins University, 1938, and the Patten Lectures at Indiana, 1941.

"He has lectured and read his poems at hundreds of colleges and clubs and schools across America, has been on the staff of all the Writers' Conferences at the University of New Hampshire, and been Phi Beta Kappa Poet at Harvard, Virginia, Tufts, Hamilton, Colby, Bates, and so on.

"He has a Doctor of Letters degree from Bowdoin and the University of Maine. At present, along with regular teaching, he is helping to train premeteorological Army Air Corps men at Bowdoin.

"This poet, besides teaching, keeps in good training by living during the summers on his two farms, a saltwater one, with a sea-captain mansion, on the Maine coast, and a freshwater one on the Kennebec, the river whose history he wrote as the first volume in the Rivers of America Series.

"He has four children, to keep him young, and a wife who is his best critic. He writes, tells stories, gardens, fishes. As an amateur artist, he often does his own book jackets. He did the decorations for *Primer for America*.

"He has published twenty-six books, ranging from a life of Archbishop Laud to novels of Maine people. He does most of his writing late at night, when the children and the neighbours have quieted down: he believes he can say the best things about life—which he maintains poetry is honour-bound to say—then. Mr. Coffin has received many honours, including the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his 'Strange Holiness'."

From his present volume we quote from "The Little Red School," where Mr. Coffin's education began, which was the stepping-stone to Oxford:

The little house where boys and girls
Sat with a heavy heart,
The red house with the single room
Was where we got our start.

One dipper and one water pail
Ladled out life to all,
And Washington held the eastern side
And Lincoln the west wall.

Between them were the dog-eared books
And slates with bright yarn bound.
The names of boys and girls cut deep
With hearts of love around . . . .

Very close to corn and truth
To cows and all creation,
America sat with naked feet
And learned to be a nation.

Reaching this reviewer while newspaper headlines and radio commentators were stressing the momentous decisions arrived at the historic Quebec Conference, *The Book of Canadian Poetry* (University of Chicago Press) appeared as a timely work. The two recalled that it was in Canada that the heroic General Wolfe recited poetry, before he lost his life at Quebec.

The editor of this critical and historical anthology is the distinguished scholar A. J. Smith, Professor of English at Michigan State College. One of the "modern group" of Canadian poets, educated at McGill University and at the University of Edinburgh, Professor Smith has made a valuable contribution to the body of enduring literature by presenting a selection of the best poems written in English by Canadians, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present time. The 452 pages of text are divided into six parts as follows: Indian Poetry and French-Canadian Folk Songs; Pioneer and Emigrant; The Rise of a Native Tradition; The New Nationalism; "The Golden Age"; Varieties of Romantic Sensibility; Modern Poetry: The Native Tradition; Modern Poetry: The Cosmopolitan Tradition; and a liberal Bibliography and Index of Authors and Index of First Lines. The 250 poems by seventy-six authors range chronologically from the year 1825 to the present year of 1943.

The poems are introduced by a survey giving a summary of the development of Canadian poetry. He says:

"Canadian poetry, indeed, is the record of life in Canada as it takes on significance when all the resources of sensibility, intelligence and spirit are employed in experiencing it or in understanding it.

"Some of the poets have concentrated on what is individual and unique in Canadian life and others upon what it has in common with life everywhere.

"The one group has attempted to describe and interpret whatever is essentially and distinctively Canadian and thus come to terms with an environment that is only now ceasing to be Colonial.

"The other, from the very beginning, has made a heroic effort to transcend colonialism by entering the universal, civilising culture of ideas."

Out of the wealth of *The Book of Canadian Poetry* it is especially interesting to note the contemporary Canadian poets who came into this world just before or since the publication of Edmund Clarence Steadman's *Victorian Anthology, 1837-1895*, which dedicated considerable space to Canadian singers. Professor Smith reviews the following contemporary poets: Arthur Stringer, Theodore G. Roberts, Katherine Hale, Louise Morey Bowman, Frederick G. Scott, Duncan C. Scott, George H. Clarke, Audrey Alexandra Brown, E. J. Pratt, Lloyd Roberts, Kenneth Leslie, Arthur S. Bourinot, W. W. E. Ross, Leo Cox, Elise Aylen, Earle Birney, Charles Bruce, Dorothy Livesay, Mary Elizabeth Colman, Floris Clark McLaren, Anne Marriott, Frederick E. Laight, Robert Finch, Marcus Adeney, L. A. Mackay, Neil Tracy, Alfred G. Bailey, Leo Kennedy, Carol Coates, A. M. Klein, Ralph Gustafson, James Wreford, Patrick Anderson, P. K. Page, Ronald Hambleton, Margaret Avison.

We give the six opening lines from the poem "The Rising Village," by Oliver Goldsmith, the Canadian-born grand-nephew and namesake of the famous and much beloved author of "The Deserted Village":

What noble courage must their hearts have fired.
How great the ardor which their souls inspired,
Who, leaving far behind their native plain,
Have sought a home beyond the western main;
And braved the terrors of the stormy sea,
In search of wealth, of freedom, and of ease!

We pass from the pioneers described by Goldsmith to F. R. Scott's "The Canadian Authors Meet," of to-day:

The air is heavy with "Canadian" topics.
And Carman, Lampman, Roberts, Campbell, Scott
Are measured for their faith and philanthropics
Their zeal for God and King, their earnest thought.

The cakes are sweet, but sweeter is the feeling
That one is mixing with the *literati*;
It warms the cold and melts the most congealing
Really, it is a most delightful party.

Shall we go round the mulberry bush, or shall
We gather at the river, or shall we
Appoint a poet laureate this Fall
Or shall we have another cup of tea?

O Canada, O Canada, Oh can
A day go by without new authors springing
To paint the native maple, and to plan
More ways to set the selfsame welkin ringing?

Those who love the sea and ships—and who does not?—will welcome *Wee Dave* (Macmillan). Lieut.-Commander Frederick B. Watt, R.C.N.R., the author, presents in simple narrative verse a tale of a typical freighter captain who loves the sea, and discharges his arduous duties in peace and war gallantly. It is a companion volume of the author's *Boy Blue Verses*, of *Wild War I*, and *Vagrant*, of pre-war period.

Commander Watt, "a typical generation Canadian," was called from peace duties when the collapse of France "brought sudden and terrible strain on Britain's life-line to North America." The tale began then, "scrawled on the backs of envelopes and signal pads, the poem grew for two years, while its author, aboard hundreds of merchant vessels, pursued his duties as Naval Boarding Officer. Some of the passages written in narrow seas punctuated by the thump of underwater explosions."

The following poignant lines, duty's call to the woman, occur in Part I:

I felt the stream that was my very life—
The stream of men trekkers from the Tyne,
From Humber, Thames—the following battle line
That drew its strength from Belfast, Merseyside,
From Bristol Channel and the misty Clyde;
The stream that, were it dammed, meant England dead.

I had scant cause to love it but its flood
Ran with a tide's insistence in my blood.
Terrible, England's need of that thin line
Of ships—but no less terrible was mine.

Annie Hunt Bartlett.

POETS AND PRETENDERS

A FAITHFUL SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSIONS

IT is not often that we have to review so significant a book as *Poems of Love and Death*, by Arnold Vincent Bowen (The Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.), or one which so superbly vindicates our often expressed opinion that the muse must be wooed for her own sake in a mood of self-forgetfulness if she is to be won. Mr. Bowen has not been in a hurry to share his felicity with us, but has been content to sing for his own ear, to express for himself the depth of his own emotions, content if he can get closer to that perfection of note which undivided devotion brings.

Although this is a first book there is nothing to remind us of it. Both technically and emotionally the work is of a high order. The craft has been learned and forgotten except in the service of inspiration, and in consequence the poems all have that air of unstraining inevitability which makes them as natural a mode of expression to the author as a warble to a thrush. These poems are instinct with meaning and emotion expressed with complete lucidity, proving once again that it is only necessary to know the language perfectly in order to be completely articulate in poetry.

We are in entire agreement with Mr. Herbert Palmer who, in a preface, hails Mr. Bowen as a natural poet. He does not use words consciously or foppishly, nor does he make mud pies or even confections with them. He respects them and honours their function and meaning with a puritanical fervour, saying more in a few words than most, and with that simplicity which is identical with beauty.

> Flicker to rest in thy last urn
> To move but with the Planet's turn.

is a good example of what we mean. How deftly economical and how simply beautiful are these fourteen words and what a wealth of meaning for the imaginative reader is in them.

There is very much more which we should like to quote if space did not forbid. Suffice it to say that our solitary example is also a genuine sample which guarantees the whole. We heartily recommend this book and wish it the success it so well merits.

The next volume from the same house made us wonder whether we are less catholic in our taste than self-analysis has persuaded us until we remembered that it is not a publisher's business to lead crusades but to earn dividends. It is, of course, true that the world is not excessively populated by high-brows and that there exists a thirst for less exciting wine than Mr. Bowen's for which *Ballet Shoe*, by Alan Hull Walton (The Fortune Press, 6s.), is quite a pleasant draught. This book is competent when regarded as versification, but it does not contain poetry in either of its parts: in neither is there any sign of that inspiration that sings of inner meanings with cadences and words which bear from the deeps a mysterious power and beauty. As for the second part—Prose Poems—we are quite unable to find relevancy in the title. These are pieces of ordinary, flatnish prose, undistinguished either by diction or emotional inspiration. They are not examples of fine poetic thought not clothed in luminous words and it appears to us that Mr. Walton had been wiser to stick to his pleasant verses, which, as he himself says in his preface, are his preferred method of recording spiritual experiences which otherwise would find expression in a diary. In that remark he has indicated with sufficient clarity the place these verses will occupy in the world of letters, although there are doubtless many who will find in them a pleasure of a fleeting kind which will stir no deeps, however, nor arouse more than a transient response from the spirit.

The next volume *Fire Poems*, by Sidney Ridgway (Hurst Bros., 2s. 6d.), strikes the true, rich lode again. What is this magic of words which, by mere assembly in a certain order, become pregnant with rarer beauty and deeper significance than is their

everyday achievement ? To us the answer is clear that it is when they come unsought, at the bidding of the sub-conscious compulsion of an inspiration which is emotional in its nature. Then they fall into the pattern which men call poetry, not because of rhythm or rhyme, but because of the mysterious power with which they are invested.

All of which is not to say that Mr. Ridgway is, with his *First Poems,* on Parnassus, but only that he has had glimpses, now and then, of that delectable peak. Some of his work appears to have been written for its own sake and this is not therefore his best ; but much was, as obviously, forced from him by an inner pressure, not concerned with any desire for self-entertainment. What a man may write for his own pleasure will seldom, if ever, entertain others unless he be a superman ; but it is given to the author we think, if he will faithfully await his moment, to delight us often. He says in a poem called "Twenty Minutes Later" :

> Day-sense has flung his cloak
> And fog about me,
> The more I fight him off
> The more I blind myself with doubt—
> With doubt, or is it dust ?

He knows then that a poet must dream, must forget himself and the day, that inspiration may blow doubt or dust away to leave vision undimmed.

It is a good moment when a new book by Miss E. M. Almedingen appears and *Out of Seir* (John Lane, 3s. 6d.) has no disappointment for us between its covers. Following upon *Poloniae Testamentum* it carries her fame forward with an ease which is not remarkable for her except for the observation she once made in our hearing that she knew nothing of poetry ; yet indeed why should she when she is a poet by a natural process which makes it a normal mode of expression for her ? In *Out of Seir* she writes in an untraditional mode, but is beautifully easy to read in spite of her metaphysical searching into the deeps of her own mind. That mind is clear and her diction sufficiently illuminates it for us. We see courage and faith undimmed by the horror of the times and more, we see why and are refreshed and comforted. There is no pessimism because fear is recognised for what it is, an emotion of the flesh which has no place in the larger permanence of man's immortal destiny.

El Alamein and other Poems by Cyril Harvey (Harrison and Sons, Ltd.) is a varied collection of modes and moods which is neither very arresting nor very tuneful. The technique of those poems which are rhymed is often faulty, with many poor or even bad rhymes, and there is some indulgence in cliche. But there are ups as well as downs in this uneven book and we liked especially "Moonlight," an excursion into free verse, and "Awakening," a rhymed lyrical piece, which both sound an authentic, unforced note. Also the sonnets, of which there are five, are pleasing if a bit casual at times with their rhymes. We are old-fashioned enough to demand perfection in rhyme if rhyme is intended. If not, we make no complaint, but we object to anyone having it both ways without protest.

To Win a New World and Other Poems by Canon Arthur N. Bax (Martin's Ltd., 1s.) is a collection of verses wherein the author has indulged a varied fancy without probing deeply enough to capture much poetry in his imaginative wanderings. The verses are sincere though slight and if we have any preference it is for those which rhyme. Blank verse, unlit with poetry, is in our view an unnecessarily tortured prose.

It quite unreasonably irritates a reviewer to find his arduous labours increased by the work of dealing with uncut pages and unless he find, when he has indulged the printer's whim, something unusual to repay him, he is, being more human than most, apt to feel less than charitable. This gives him something more to overcome before

he can be as calmly judicial as he should be. *Poems from the Russian* by Francis Cornford and F. Spolionowsky Salaman (Faber, 3s. 6d.) presented us with this double task but, alas, failed to compensate us entirely. Much of the elemental character of Russian poetry has survived what appears to us to be quite competent translation, but we were unimpressed with the selections which, however good in their native tongue, seemed somewhat uninspired in ours. Those poems of a narrative type, of which there are many in the volume, would be especially liable to lose that characteristic music upon which this type of poem depends. We doubt whether "John Gilpin" would sound as fine in Russian either.

The best one could say of *Poems for the Forces* by W. R. Titterton (Werner Laurie, 1s. 6d.) is that they are barrack-room balladish, but, alas, without the neat, finished force of those masterpieces. We wish people would not write unrhymed verse. Verse has but that one justification, poetry is another matter. If unrhymed verse can capture music it is worth while, but certainly Mr. Titterton's does not and he takes liberties which Kipling was wise enough to eschew. In a blurb which decorates the cover is the story of an encounter with a Sergeant Major about the length of the author's hair. We trust he will forgive us if we suggest that he should inform the R.S.M. that long hair is no longer the mark of a poet and that his resulting suspicion of the author was unfounded. There is, however, a quality which if it be not of Parnassus has some acquaintance with the lyre in many of the pieces. Even when the rhyming is lax and casual there is sometimes a marching music to be found which can be exhilarating. But do not let us talk of poetry or poets. We are in the pub, but it is the four-ale bar and a good drink that is if you don't call it nectar.

Uncut pages again! There may be, there is, a war on, but we do not expect to be always knife in hand. The title of this new volume is simply *Poems by Bowyer Nichols,* collected by J. W. Mackail, O.M. (Basil Blackwell, 7s. 6d.). We cut the pages and looked for more. The compiler, in a preface, calls Bowyer Nichol's work an exquisite poetical product and if this is high praise, and from an obvious partisan, we nevertheless endorse it if the term "exquisite" be understood in not too superlative a sense. The author lived to be eighty, yet what can be found of his work is contained in this one slender volume of sixty-seven pages. He was a Newdigate prizeman in 1883, with a narrative poem entitled "Inez de Castro" in rhymed couplets, which marches with an unstudied ease and a maturity of emotional feeling remarkable in a young man. Maturity and a fine grace are dominant in all these poems which have so worthily been rescued from obscurity, but we do not suggest to our readers that here is matter for the same rejoicing as the discovery of an Old Master in an attic.

The Final Infamy by H. L. Senior (W. H. Allen, 2s. 6d.) was the next volume in the pile to invite our comment—a long poem, devoted entirely to the story of man with the emphasis upon his errors, with advice for betterment and a warning of worse to come if Art with a capital "A" is not made the major interest and concern of mankind. Without expressing any opinion upon the justice of most of Mr. Senior's condemnations and conclusions, we still take leave to question the miraculous healing properties of Art. There are greater things than this, which has little to do with those moral qualities which alone can uplift mankind to a higher plane and give his course a new and healthier direction. History has no lesson to teach us such as would justify Mr. Senior's conviction of Art's ennobling influence. Both its practitioners and its connoisseurs have been, in other respects, men and women of their times, gifted with vision, no doubt, but morally unaffected by their own visions. Poetry itself, which is probably prominently in the author's mind, is only the product of a flair for words and an emotional temperament which feels things a little more deeply than common and

this is a dubious foundation upon which to build the regeneration of all mankind. As to the poem itself, we were not carried away upon any flood of feeling. The subject did not, we are afraid, inspire Mr. Senior with poetry. The versification is capable, but lacks, in the main, the easy, rushing rhythm which is necessary if the reader is to find such work impressive. It struck us as lacking in calmness and objectivity, sounding too often the less convincing note of denunciation and showing a want of essential realism.

Another volume from the same publisher is *Battle Dress Ballads* by Leslie R. Frewin (W. H. Allen, 2s. 6d.). This is a protean world and we are never more sure of this than when we tackle a pile of poetry. Mr. Frewin's songs are excellent, nothing deep or dewy-eyed, but tough, you-be-damned and tuneful. He has been perfectly faithful to the needs of his intention, which was to sing like a soldier, careless, gay, unshockable. So he rhymes, copiously, lilts always, and reveres rhythm like the ten commandments, only more so. The reader will enjoy this book. Even if he finds little poetry to soothe his war-weary spirit he will find plenty of songs to cheer his heart, which amounts to the same thing. There is music in plenty and an effortless skill that makes it easy on the ear, which is exactly what ballads, battle-dress or any other, should have.

A very different book is *Time to Go* by J. H. B. Peel (Watts, 5s.). A first volume of poetry, though preceded by a book of essays, it is at once introspective as befits a young man and objective as is proper in an essayist. This may account for the lack of emotional power in much of the work which, in spite of its technical competence, has little or no appeal to the senses. We accompany Mr. Peel on innumerable mental rambles and excursions, but never really get a peep into his heart. We noticed a little poem called "Mercenary," which ended :

the politician	The unborn foal
Sells mankind	The poet sells
The breeder sells	. . . . . he sells his soul.

Here is, anyhow, a false note. There is no particular evidence in this volume of any such transaction, and after making all due allowance for poetic licence we do not think we have more than a good five shilling's worth of the author's mental activity within these covers. He must learn to dissociate his soul from the effort or act of composition and in no case should he consider the sale of so noble an attribute for so trifling a fee.

The next volume was good both inside and out. Nicely bound, exquisitely titled and beautifully dust-covered, *Ferns in the Waste* by R. C. Ormerod (Macmillan, 4s. 6d.) came well-heralded to hand. That it should justify its external appeal with an inner excellence was an experience which made us feel, at once, less cynical. At the risk of dwelling too long upon what may be thought matters not pertinent to a review, we pause, still, to congratulate the publisher upon the excellent paper and the beautiful printing which, while quite justly placed at the service of a good poet, are so often and so painfully absent in similar circumstances.

The author is a young man, an officer in the Indian Armoured Corps, but (or consequently) he has a direct simplicity of expression and a vibrancy of tone which tempts and rewards perusal. His youth has not denied him maturity, not his comparative inexperience insight. He is both strong and gentle, impassioned and calm and we should describe him as an intelligible modern, if we may be permitted a small contradiction in terms. He does not admit any compulsion to rhyme, but receives them casually if they are handy when he wants them. He breaks his rhythm when he has the impulse. This is enough for him to demonstrate an unaggressive indepen-

dence, and if the result is some loss of music he may think this no great matter. Perhaps it is not, but still it can never be a gain to lose it. Both rhyme and rhythm are embellishments even to sense and have that further virtue that by them poetry is made memorable and quotable. Here is a sample of simple music which we take from page 29 and which may serve to illustrate the argument when compared with many of the other poems. It is to our mind full of music and memorable :

Let loving be rife — As life's to the earth,
For the moral's of worth : — So song is to life.

The Seeker by H. Herman Chilton (Cornish, 6s.) is a long poem, 106 pages, which we thought when we began to read it was to travel the same denunciatory road as Mr. Senior's (*The Final Infamy*), which we reviewed above. We were mistaken. This is a very different book and upon a very different plane. Mr. Chilton remains tender and calm and submissive. His attitude is sufficiently expressed in the proem in

Man's life is but a fitful span, — He only knows that he must die,.
He knows not whence he came or why — Subservient to a hidden plan.

The method followed in describing the vicissitudes and the triumphs of mankind is to make a separate poem, a chapter as it were, upon representative great men of the past, although there are poems on Machines, France and the U.S.A. There is, however, always a belief in goodness and a willingness to see the gain as well as the loss. From prehistoric man, ere he had learned to walk upright, until the fall of France and the entry of the United States into the war, is a far cry and Mr. Chilton's plan is to thread the great men who have adorned humanity upon a string, like jewels, which we are invited to admire in detail, one by one, through his lens. There is much fine poetry in the book. The form, that of the proem, part of which we have quoted, is unvaried but does not tire the reader. Rather it becomes a normality as one reads on and lifts the beauty of line and phrase more prominently to the sense, even if the early Anglo-Saxon poets wrote something similar.

But what is his conclusion and his moral ? Has he any panacea ? You shall judge, for we will quote his final stanza as we quoted his first :

He strives, and fights, and licks his scars,
Defeated cries that all is well !
Issues like Dante, out of Hell
To lift his gaze towards the stars.

Here is no convalescence with poetry for a poultice and a regeneration through rhyme, but an endless, unlost battle never wholly won.

A Private Country by Lawrence Durrell (Faber, 6s.) is a volume which it is suggested will render the author conspicuous among his contemporaries. This is no large claim perhaps, but still, we think, too large, in spite of the vigour of mind and force of expression displayed. There is much originality of form but not of matter. The author has a considerable gift of juxtaposing the most surprising incompatibles in an arresting and often amusing manner, but this is not necessarily profound nor inevitably poetry. Take this :

This man, my Romans, was a Roman
A breaker of sky-line, took first prize
In the regatta for men past menopause,
Passed through the eye of the needle, broke
The hug of the Great Bear, the hug
Of a glacier's hairy back and oxygen's claws.
Spat on Orion, left his shoes in church.

etc., etc., and so on. There is, of course, imaginative power (or is it agility) in passages

such as this, but there is also some nonsense which we feel sure is not how the author would wish to be conspicuous among contemporary poets.

But is this contemporary poetry ? There are more than faint signs to-day of a return to traditional forms, to recognisable metres and rhythms, to in fact, the medium and tools which the majority of poets have always used. There is no disposition, we believe, to continue to paint with the thumb or with bizarre and unusual materials and there is a revival of a taste for music and cadence of which Mr. Durrell has not yet become aware or which he still resists.

There is no particular attraction to the reader in this sort of bombardment with the unexpected. It defeats itself on page two by arousing an ironic reflection that the unexpected always happens, and this to the detriment of calm enjoyment. The valiant seeker after enlightenment can only feel a thicker darkness gather round him as he reads and take small comfort from the impression he will get that if the author tried less he would achieve much more, for there is no question of his capacity. He should reflect that it takes two to make a book, as well as a quarrel—the writer and the reader.

Making all due allowance for our own and the author's views we were unable to reconcile ourselves to *Silver Wings* by James Crawford Milne (Eneas Mackay, 2s. 6d.). This volume is embellished with silver paper, decorated with a pleasant photograph of Mr. Milne, and completed by contextual notes and a dedication. This seems to be a good deal of pother about a wee collection of verses, slight in character and undistinguished in manner and matter. The poems here and there offer a good line and there is a sufficient mastery of technique, but we cannot recommend the book as a contribution to poetry which is at all commensurate with its excellent appearance. There is, we think, an unnecessary parade of erudition in places and we also noticed, at times, some flatness and unsuitability of diction.

Immortal Few by H. L. Gee (Epworth Press, 1s.) is advertised as the Story of the Battle of Britain in Verse. With this we have no quarrel, but this long effort, extending to some twenty-five pages, has little of interest to compensate for its perusal. Yet the workmanship is good enough to make one wish that Mr. Gee had resisted the facility which hurried him on and, instead, had pondered his brave theme in an endeavour to wring from it something of the grim emotional quality of that great time. The Battle of Britain can never be described adequately in mere verse, it awaits a great poet.

A very different matter is *The Orchestral Mountain* by J. F. Hendry (Routledge, 5s.). Here is no attempt to be too plain, or even plain. The music of this improbable hummock is not unconcerned with melody, but is little troubled by our need for comprehension. Consequently we were not much affected in our emotions by the author's effortless obscurity. We were left too often in puzzlement as to what it was all about and faintly regretful that such fine words should mean so little to us. Coherent meaning seemed often so near and yet it seldom dawned with that satisfying impact that makes a poem memorable. Where there might be a misprint (if there be any) we should be unable to detect it. For instance on page 9 we read :

> Staged is the Park is the immortality
> They have forgotten in the city.
>
> It is the oldest church and Parliament
> Most constant lyric and the last lament.

and yet we dared not read the first "is" in line one as "in." We certainly would not venture a bet upon it since, for us, the change would bring light no nearer. We are very well aware that in making these observations we are betraying an old-fashioned

and out-moded attitude towards poetry. But here is something which defies criticism with a verbal surrealism and leaves us nothing to say but to lament our frustration.

We turned with relief to *South of Forty* by John Pudney (John Lane, 2s. 6d.) because we knew that here would be words which would convey their meaning to us in visions and pictures which would rob the reading of fatigue. Yet we were not so much regaled by what is, by custom, regarded as poetry as by the author's never failing skill in expression by compression. Dare we say that the present volume differs little from its forerunners for that very reason. Mr. Pudney seems to be too content with his never failing gift for originality of phrase to seek for less tangible but more lasting virtue. The new volume from this prolific pen is at once too objective and too incidental to the outward impressions of the author's experiences. We do not see much of Mr. Pudney in his poems but, too often, only that considerable gift of versification which is so unmistakably his own.

For this type of lyrical poetry we should prefer a little more easily-grasped coherence. The rigid verbal economy of the author's style makes comprehension difficult at times, though there is no real obscurity. This we believe to be a fault, like any virtue practised too sedulously. The listener would, we are sure, be too often defeated in an oral reading.

The Favil Press send us a Resurgam book, *Here and Now*, which is priced at 3s., and is a compilation of prose and poetry by different contributors. We do not propose to offer any comments upon the prose items, but to confine ourselves to the verse. This opens on page 8, with a couple of poems by Nicholas Moore, which bear his indefinable stamp of emotional dissatisfaction :

> O, my darling, through the rage
> That our time and age let loose,
> How can we our Heaven assuage
> Our gaudy Hell refuse ?

is one of his good things and also one of his typicalities. Francis King, who follows with two poems, exceeds a poet's licence with the line "The ornaments of gold are dulled with rust." The poem in which this occurs is, like many of the others in this magazine, distinguished by a difficulty which ignores the superior claims of simplicity, and by a stridency which drowns music. Lawrence Whistler in "Haystack," a short piece which easily escapes the above generalisation, since it has both music and simplicity, is not, however, to be commended for the entire absence of punctuation, except two full-stops. Why be eccentric ? His next contribution, "Dead Tree," shows no fear of commas and as for full-stops, his first sentence is the word "Horror," all in caps, followed by two three-worded ones, also verbless. We could not possibly charge these to a deficient knowledge of syntax, so why ? Among other poems which are faintly provocative on account of their difficulty is "Marching at Night," by Alex Comfort. We are firm believers in simplicity in art, holding fast to the view that only by this can great effects by achieved. This is especially our opinion in regard to poetry, which is a simple affair of words and ordinary human meanings neither recondite nor intricate. The poet's proper business is to see and feel deeply and clearly, but above all to remember the abiding necessity of not troubling the reader with fanfarronades. Simple beauty is not, however, absent from all the poems provided. Most contributors exhibit more than one aspect of their talent, and the book ends with a typically charming piece by Herbert Palmer, which no one could cavil at on the score of intricacy.

Our diligent reader will have guessed by the foregoing remarks that what we are always looking for is the tongue of beauty. It may be our mistake to confuse this with

simplicity since we came next to another Resurgam with just this title, *Tongue of Beauty*, by Leslie Norris (Favil Press, 1s.). Looking hopefully for beauty we found a song of which we quote one stanza:

> Therefore I pick fastidiously with a gloved hand into the
> Packed rag-bag of inspiration, ignoring with singular
> Fortitude the more noisy aspirations of social and political
> Implications. I choose old-fashioned words and subjects
> Smooth-worn with time.

This is definitely not our type of beauty nor our sort of poetry. It appears to us to be prose of no particular eminence. There is much more of the same sort of thing in this book and we record our opinion, for what it is worth, that we do not consider it beautiful. Mr. Norris, in the poem bearing the same title as the book, claims much in the first part of the following line:

> Even so, I, her adopted voice, am small amidst the clamour of her admirers,

but expresses a truth in its latter part which gives hope for the future.

Songs before Sunset by Saxon Barton (Epworth Press, 2s. 6d.) is a sharp contrast to the foregoing volume with simple music, uncomplicated and sincere, but slight and without much poetic importance. Yet there is plenty of musical rhythm, unforced rhyming and a nice, neat technique—in fact just those qualities which these others are so much in revolt against. When we deal with a batch of new deliveries like this, it almost seems as though one is bound to alternate between the turbid and the shallow, so few can be deep and pellucid. Still, upon their true plane, we can praise these *Songs before Sunset*. Their cleverness is that of technique, so much less dangerous than that of the intellect which has wrecked more poets than any other of the manifold dangers to which they are exposed in their progress towards Parnassus. And what can we say of *Under the Cliff* by Geoffrey Grigson (Routledge, 5s.).

> Ride in my car, he said My manure will grow your plants.
> My wife, my daughters; Why do my men strike?

Would it be fair or unfair to quote the rest of this poem entitled "The Emperor of Manure and his Fairy Queen"? It all depends how you look at it. We think we have been fair enough although we can't say why his men strike if we are not exactly surprised. To take a single example from a whole book and divorce it from its contextual stanza, may not seem truly impartial, but there still remains the question why it was deemed suitable to include in a book presented with the assertion that it is fresh evidence of original vision and fine skill and a quotation from an opinion by Francis Scarfe that Mr. Grigson's poetry is at once sensual, rational, exact and economic. We do not really understand what "economic" means in this connection, but we do not doubt that the intention is to praise in no economical a manner.

There is, of course, a closer approach to the "rational," to quote Mr. Scarfe, in some of the poems. Space in these days forbids free quotation, but there is very little evidence of concern as to whether we gather the "exact" meaning intended or not. As to the sensual quality, we can only say that if this was present it escaped us in a decent obscurity. We do not believe that such work does anything to advance the cause or the love of poetry.

"One of the pleasures of publishing a book—especially a book of verse—is to wonder who is destined to read it," writes Mr. Clifford Bax, in a foreword to *Take all Colours* by Brian Hill (Favil Press, 3s. 6d.). He goes on "We can always count on a few friends." He is wrong by an understatement. Here is a book that can surely count on many. It makes no pretensions, it gives an impression (alas, so rare) that it is unaware that any one ever will read it. For this cause it does not condescend and

plays no verbal games or tricks designed to attract attention and applause.

About our feet — With the quietude
The valley curled — Of another world.

Could anything be more instantly graphic, simpler, or say more in fewer words? Here is that depth with lucidity which is poetry. The poems are of many themes, but all are treated with a gentle sincerity and understanding which is an unmixed delight. The book is a thin one, too thin, and the selection, made from poems written during the last twenty years, niggardly. We are sure, from those we are given, that we might have been allowed more than eighteen pages of what is a real refreshment in these aberrant days. But for what we have received we are duly thankful. Our faith is revived.

Why did Mr. H. H. Creasey stop short, in his book *In Praise of Lincolnshire* (Stockwell, 1s.), at the physical perfections of his natal county. We looked in vain for evidence of the love with which it inspires him more subtle than affirmation and yet he must often have been plunged into reverie born of that affection. The proper way to praise is to reveal the deep emotions, the subtle, fleeting nostalgias which lost loves arouse, to paint one's picture as it were in effects not causes, by using associated memories not otherwise pertinent. Rupert Brooke has shown the way of it beautifully in "Grantchester." He sees everything idealised with the longing which possesses his mind, contrasting his lost beatitude with present malaise. How delightfully he makes his landscapes real, with shades of Tennyson, with vicars and rural deans. His woods are infested with fauns and naiads, his villages are significant with the character of their inhabitants and so we see, with our imagination, with a clarity beyond the duller comprehension of the mere mind.

Mr. Creasey's verses are sincere and well written upon a plane which he should and can abandon. He reveals an emotional drive which is not the three dimensional affair of his poetry. We advise him to burn the bearing rein with which he reduces his Pegasus to a gentle curvetting and let the beast fly as far and fast as he will in the realm of imaginative and emotional fancy.

A slim volume called simply *XXI Poems,* by Charles Richard Cammell (Ditchling Press), contains, in the main, reprints of work previously published, gathered together into an attractive edition of a hundred copies. Some of the poems are upon Scottish scenes or personalities, but there is a variety of theme. Mr. Cammell's lyricism is well-known to our readers, as is, also, his confident and polished use of the arts of versification. If his book reaches to the heights but here and there it is only fair to say that he has not always endeavoured to do more than charm us with a delicate fancy and a tuneful voice. In achieving this desire so well he finds good things to say,

What though the Rose hath slept,
Her sweetness she hath kept,
Nor lost her thorn,

is but one example among many which come so easily from him.

On another plane we were much impressed by a short piece called "Reprisals," a paraphrase of Blake. We quote the second and last stanza in full:

For every Child is an equal Thing
In the just scales of Heaven's King,
And a tear from a Mother's broken heart
May haply break the Victor's dart.

This is hard to beat for the poignancy of its reminder that indiscriminate vengeance may well be less profitable than the belief of war-blinded politicians. Man is as accountable in reprisal as in aggression—a truth that we are all in some danger of

forgetting, and which Mr. Cammell does well to recall with so fine a poetic skill.

And lastly, *Vignettes and Impressions in Scots and English Verse, 1941-1943* by W. L. Ferguson (Oliver and Boyd, 5s.)—a long title but not a long book. The poems are slight but tuneful and to quote the quotation on the dust cover from *The Times Literary Supplement* he is master of his instrument. But he does not sing immortally, though that he sings at all, and as well as he does, is good. We cannot venture any criticism of the poems in Scots. Mr. Ferguson is fortunate in his mastery of a tongue accidentally immortalised by Robert Burns, who used it, presumably, because he was at home in it. The author of the book under review treads on dangerous ground when he emulates a master, but whether he has retained his footing or not we cannot say. What must be, must be, and with Burns we are content, but we see small profit in the unnecessary and prefer Mr. Ferguson in his normal, untortured English.

A Great Poetic Accomplishment

A Masterly Treatment of Hoelderlin

Hoelderlin did not receive recognition during his lifetime and for many years after his name remained almost obscure. Only in 1911 (nearly seventy years after his death) the first authentic edition of his work appeared, presenting to the German public a poet whose depth of vision and purity of language had an immediate appeal. From that time Hoelderlin's influence was rapidly extending and became more power-ful than that of any other German poet. While the voices of even his most celebrated contemporaries often chill with the accent and sentiment of bygone days, his mature poems, stripped of all incidentals, have an almost prophetic impact and have remained quite unchallenged by time.

In this country Hoelderlin is still almost unknown. Only a few weeks ago Nicholson and Watson published the first comprehensive selection of his poems. Mr. Michael Hamburger, translator and editor, certainly deserves the highest praise, both for his rendering of the original as for his selection of poems. He has striven, above all, to give a literal and faithful translation, and it seems all the more remarkable that in doing so he managed to preserve most of the original's strength and spontaneous appeal, and almost throughout its rhythm and regularity of metre. The contracted style of Hoelderlin's mature poems would have baffled or mercilessly shown up any less accomplished translator, but Mr. Hamburger, with great sensitiveness, always finds an adequate and often beautiful rendering of the most difficult lines. This might be illustrated by only example :

The smile of the Lord is hidden
In day-time, when
The living seems fettered and
Febrile or also
By night, when all is mixed
In disorder and ancient
Confusion returns.

Every endeavour of introducing poems in a foreign language only by means of translation remains unsatisfactory, and Mr. Hamburger, avoiding such a mistake, has included the original text in this publication. It seems a pity, however, that he has not adopted modern spelling in the German text, thus greatly and unnecessarily adding to the trials of those who "do not read the original with ease." Further, it must be said, that the book would have been more complete by the inclusion of an index.

Mr. Hamburger's long preface serves as a profound and enlightened introduction to Hoelderlin's work. With great insight he has followed up the poet's tragic life from his birth in 1770 to his end, after thirty-seven years of complete insanity, in 1843. In the first chapter, "Apprenticeship," Mr. Hamburger describes Hoelderlin passing

through the monastic school of Maulbronn and years of theological study at the University of Tuebigen, later coming into contact in Jena with the Great of his time, Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, Fichte, and others; a young man, easily enthused and quickly dejected, filled with the sounding idealism of the late eighteenth century, but struggling for clarity of thought and for transition from "emotional ardour to reason."

A new period of Hoelderlin's life started in Frankfurt, where, in his love for "Diotima" his tense idealism was given now an emotional basis; and his ideal of unity and harmony became an actual experience. His Greek novel *Hyperion* and many poems were written in these three years which stand out as the happiest of his life. But the parting from "Diotima" leaves him "as one who has shipwrecked":

> We wanted to part? deemed it wise and good?
> Why then
> It was done, did the deed like murder confound us?

In the years that followed Hoelderlin's most mature poems and fragments of *Empedocles* were written, the depth of his suffering inspiring them with almost prophetic intensity. Incapable of resorting to cynicism and irony or escaping into the sentimental pessimism of the Romantics, he exposed, as he once wrote, his "entire soul . . . in love and in work, to destructive reality."

In 1802 Hoelderlin returned to his mother's home in a condition of "furious raving" from Bordeaux, where he had held a position as tutor. Hoelderlin's mind not yet quite broken, recovers under the care of his friends, and for four more years, with extreme exertion of will power, he completed his translation of Sophocles and Pindar and wrote a number of hymns and odes in which more or less obscure parts alternate with lines of brilliant clarity and rare beauty. In spite of his foreboding that before long his intellect would give way to the flood of madness, his poems have few notes of despair. Out of his suffering crystallise such visions as:

> Near is — But where there is danger, the
> The God, and hard to grasp. — Saving powers grow too.

Finally, in 1806, his exhausted mind collapsed and the long years up to his death were spent in absolute dementia. Yet often the mad Hoelderlin, at the request of visitors, would jot down some poems. Incomprehensible, lacking all continuity of thought, they still surprise with their perfect metre and the rich musical quality of his former work.

Mr. Hamburger, in his selection of poems, has given a comprehensive picture of the various stages of Hoelderlin's development and, it is hoped, that so serious and complete a work as this meets with every success.

Two notable anthologies come from Fabers. *That Immortal Garland* (8s. 6d.) is an English edition of a handsome anthology compiled by Mr. Bertrand Harris Bronson, of Berkeley, California, who may be a relation of that Mrs. Bronson who provided Browning with a villa at Asolo and whose daughter, Countess Edith Ruccelli, preserves a slendid collection of Browning's letters and MSS. Mr. Bronson recognises the pre-eminent significance of English national poetry, observing truly that those who love England will find here a memorable record of the spirit that is England's greatness—a spirit never more vibrantly awake than it is to-day. It is no accident that, in an anthology of English poems expressive in various ways of national feeling—of devotion to country, of pride in England's history and her glorious dead, of noble self-education and high hope—most of her greatest poets lift their voices. No people has had a loftier or a purer racial consciousness. What sounds most clearly is the poet's sense of England's dear beauty and her spiritual nobility, and his aspiration to

be worthy, like his heroic ancestors, of this great inheritance." The compiler has not found it necessary to emphasise the agony of suffering humanity: there is now "no need to be reminded that war is horrible. The best instruction to be wrung from immediate calamity is the age-old lesson of heroic endurance and self-abnegation." And this the anthology effectively does, under various appropriate headings amplifying Samuel Daniel's Prologue:

> Powre above powres, O heavenly Eloquence
> That with the strong reine of commanding word
> Dost manage, guide, and master th' eminence
> Of men's affections, more than all their sword

a rich, coherent collection in which minor as well as major poets have a proper place, but which, incidentally, clearly demonstrates Wordsworth's rights to be considered the greatest national poet England has produced, in the sense of prolonged concern in verse with questions of national significance. It also unmistakably reasserts Tennyson's claim to notice at a time when such issues are to the fore.

Mr. Walter de la Mare's monumental collection of poems on that most prolific of all subjects. Love, chiefly profane and sensual, running to 600 demy pages (25s.), deserves the treatise denied the subject by the compendium of all knowledge, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Mr. de la Mare himself partly repairs this disdain by dealing with "Love and Poetry" inabove a hundred pages, a fascinating and erudite essay, almost every line of which suggests a commentor illustration, from which we must refrain. And it would be ungracious to attempt any criticism of the classified contents, not even to complain that even if "Love among the modern poets is demoded," exquisite examples of this theme may be found. We have recently had two "perfect poems" of this genre in THE POETRY REVIEW by Phyllis Lyth and Leslie Greene, with other examples that may deserve but have not had this description accorded them.

WAIL OF A VERSE CRITIC

SURELY no age was burdened so with verse
So leaden-footed, so bereft of dreams,
Where ink in oceans floods so many reams
By warrant of the poetasters' purse.
Why must we all be poets? Is't a curse?
A new and modern babel whence, it seems,
Must come but plaintive platitudes in streams
Of frustrate incoherency or worse?
Ye Gods! how many live who sharpen quill
To storm Parnassus with pretentious rhyme,
Who, though well versed in mountaineering skill,
But plad with vigour since they cannot climb—
Condemned despite the printer's ink they spill
To fall, forgotten, down the gulf of time.

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TO THE EDITOR.

"POETRY DOESN'T SELL"

To begin with, Mr. Lowry, presumably, is not a poet. He is quite unknown to me except for his remarkably well-expressed essay published in THE POETRY REVIEW, Vol. 34, No. 1. He is correct and punctilious, concise and informative. I am not taking him point by point, but being of a somewhat poetic or imaginative and therefore rambling nature, I can see that Mr. Lowry fails, perhaps ostensibly only, yet he succeeds in driving home a truth that needs to be experienced before it can be understood.

The home-truth is that the majority of people don't care a damn whether poetry sells or not. Nor do the poets. It is the poor publishers who do. However, let us leave such baneful "menialities" and seek the reason on a higher level.

"Poets . . . are our articulators . . . ." says Mr. Lowry. I suppose "articulators" is in the dictionary, but being of a poetic fancy which, whether I like it or not, jars at being over-grammatical, I don't bother to look it up in case it is out-moded. But we all know what he means, ticklers of some sensitivity that is either pleasing or sickening according to which side of the bed we got out of that day. I somehow like this beautifully sounding designation of a poet, but usually the lesser poets are mostly inarticulate, at least, according to Mr. Lowry, who considers them not "functioning," like the make-and-break of our modern cars, when these "functionaries" let us down.

But this point of being made-to-function unit in society is eclipsed by the idea that the poets ought to be psycho-analysts. I absolutely disagree with the immature suggestion that poets "reveal us to ourselves." Even directors of poetry publishing houses are read and enjoyed (by poets ?) when they send for publication in THE POETRY REVIEW such necromantic, psycho-analytic ideas as "sub-conscious wishes, fears, memories." Aren't we glad that we are *not* like what the poets tell us ?

Mr. Lowry treats us to an outline of popular psychology which I may be pardoned for thinking has no connection whatever with true poetry. Poets have never been faith-healers ; or psycho-analysts, they are mostly seers with a touch of mediocrity in details.

Further, self-consciousness never has been "pre-occupation with self" in the case of a poet. The shyness of the maiden (we hope such maidens still function) is not the diffidence of the tender poet. He may be introspective, but he is not "pre-occupied with self." He who thinks he is cannot understand such intimate themes as ravish the poetic insight and find part expression in "love yearns" or sea-yarns. Neither are such efforts the "growing pains of sensitivity." They are purely lovers loving.

The "excellent gymnastics" of Mr. Lowry are costly and heart-wrung experiences, admittedly emotional, but not silly emotionalism. They are really "poetry," and those who write them are not necessarily "poetasters." Every writing in rhythmical form, true to accredited pattern or not, seared by strong emotion, and as someone said, "vivified by imagination or fancy" is essentially "poetry," whether we like it or not. So we ought not to complain if what appears in print does not always appeal to individual tastes. The poet never meant it to. Does the lily care if some people think it a bit stiff ? There will always be somebody who will, as the Chinese have it, prefer not to live by bread alone. "If you have two loaves sell one and buy a lily." And if the apparent thrill a young lover gets in putting his thoughts or longings on paper is merely to be considered as such, we are undone and let the people perish. We have lost vision.

It is well, therefore, that a "bird upon a bough" will still charm a simple poet-heart, whether it is "out-moded" or not by a swooping plane or a tip-toe fairy parachutist landing from the blue on a tree-top. The subject of a poem does not indicate its depth of feeling, nor does a time-honoured diety grow less worthy simply because it is worshipped anew with oft-repeated affection.

Who can compute the "enormous output of unread verse ?" It was never meant to be read by the public in most cases. It is the fault of the publishers if it is. Poets and verse-writers are cajoled into parting with some of their most intimate possessions by advertisers who publish verse, and do what they can to make poetry unsaleable. It is because we get such peculiar books by such peculiar poets produced by such peculiar publishers that a lot of sensible and sensitive people wonder if, after all, poets are not mad. I've tried to "read" some of our moderns, good, bad and indifferent, and have always felt that we misunderstand much of what we read simply because it is printed. If we first heard it recited (I mean spoken sympathetically), or sung, or read to us privately by the poet himself, we would not care so much for what it's about as for how we react to a beauty that is best seen when we close our eyes. A "multiplicity of stars," envisaged by a slender worshipper, passes an acid test if he gets us (rather me) to wonder with him, and hear a real pome praise the Maker of all that sings. Such a test might well be applied by "publishers" when in doubt as to what a poetic composition is worth in heart-beats. It may not sell, but don't dictate to the lily if you want more buyers who part with the extra loaf.

Poetry is like prayer and meditation, it is most effective in the quietness of a sympathetic environment, when we long for that subtle but innate communion with what is definitely better than we usually are. We should not "read" poetry, we should breathe it. We should be relaxed, restrained, compassionate. We should listen for the inner voice and let that "something else" mingle with what we usually are before we ask ourselves "What does he mean ?" To my mind each verse, stanza or completed idea should be re-read or re-spoken if we don't feel it worth while to continue. Never close a book of poetry with a bang. It will shake the heavens and perhaps upset some angel-singer trying to complete the melody or finish . . . .

Poets are individuals who hide from public view as long as they can. They are more or less a spirit-lisping of some soul expressing to the best of its ability some high endeavour, but who light upon some child-like form to clothe with its garment of individuality. What matter if thousands, nay millions, of these souls have lighted upon the same or similar objects on which to pour their affection of willing gratitude for something exquisite and lovely to the mind at the moment and on that individual occasion. Let it be recorded anyhow. It will never repeat in exactly the same way.

Let the poets sing whether people listen or not. Let us encourage even the "practice exercises" for that great number who couldn't appreciate a concerto, but let us see to it in our post-war "Reconstruction of the Public Leisure" that we have less mechanical reproduction of the altogether lovely, less mechanical music and acting, and we shall inculcate a new desire for the spoken, read or meditated expression of what, after all, is our birthright, that is, "crooning" (in its original sense) with "Nature's soft nurse" as we go to sleep on the bosom that bore us here, and will in the sweet long last bear us to where we shall understand and not be misunderstood.

We thank Mr. Lowry for his practical advice and helpful suggestions, but let him beware lest in the ardour of his affection he quench some smoking flax or extinguish for ever some flame that we well need to-day, little, fitful and spluttering though it be.

The Manse, Matelli, India, July 15th. A. Francon Williams.

THE "UNPOPULARITY" OF ROBERT BRIDGES

In reference to your article on the alleged unpopularity of Robert Bridges' poetry a few possible reasons are appended below :

(*a*) It is too expensive for general circulation.

(*b*) Justice has not yet been done to the older poets.
(*c*) He represents the University class in a class-conscious community.
(*d*) He was a member of the wealthier classes.
(*e*) As one having studied medicine he was likely to be didactic.
(*f*) Present-day psychiatry is tending to destroy refinement.
(*g*) Religious themes for some years have tended to become unpopular.
(*h*) Love, as a theme, is tending to disappear in a welter of mercenary humour.
(*i*) In some of his poetry his metre is irregular.
(*j*) His tastes are parochial rather than cosmic.
(*k*) Messages of "hope" are not everything in days of disillusionment.
(*l*) Poems in foreign tongues are not readily grasped by the masses.
(*m*) Reality is not necessarily good, as the aristocrats of 1792 would testify.
(*n*) It may be that in his pursuit of the essence of self he did not hit upon a true aestheticism, however plausible and logical his picture.

Melton, Suffolk. H. Chas. Clough.

"PROSE POEMS"

I have read with much interest Mr. Raymond Bourne's letter in No. 4, Vol. 34 of The Poetry Review. Nothing is further from my wish than to try conclusions with so able and so gifted a writer as Mr. Bourne. Yet I would like to comment on his letter. He writes: "It is . . . the neglect of this technique which is the origin of the 'prose poem'." I take it Mr. Bourne does not like the so-called "prose poem." Neither do I. It is painfully true, as Mr. Desmond McCarthy writes in his book *Criticism,* that we can never really understand anything we did not like at twenty-five.

There are poems written in the rhythms we are accustomed to regard as the prerogative of prose: for example, Rabindranath Tagore's poems from his own Bengali, John Millington Synge's *Old Woman's Lament,* and a great proportion of the authorised version of the Bible. Much has been written in prose form which is neither poetry nor prose, but merely a flux of words to the pen, as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch expresses it. There is quite as much in poetic forms which is not poetry. The plain fact, and indeed the only fact, which emerges clearly is that neither form, diction, nor content, nor a combination of all three, will alone suffice to make a poem. Mr. Bourne's letter suggests a question: "Wherein does poetry differ from prose?" and unfortunately he then proceeds to beg the question. William Collins (*Table Talk,* 12th July, 1827), gives us this rough and ready rule: "I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry: that is, prose, words in their best order; poetry, the best words in the best order." But while one mode of thought finding its best expression in language constitutes prose, it is a different mode of thought finding its best expression in language which constitutes poetry.

The drift of thought consequent on recent scientific, psychological and theological developments has necessitated new forms of expression. Verbal rhythms which until comparatively recently were used only in prose have been appropriated by the poet. Free verse has been found to be an essential development. Prose writers have also embarked on experiments of doubtful value, such as the vapourings of Gertrude Stein, and the equally obscure though more logically developed outpourings of James Joyce. I do not express any opinion as to their value. But this does emerge: that *technically* there is no essential difference between poetry and prose. "Prose-poem," therefore, is a meaningless term.

But the writer who does not know wherein lies the difference between prose and poetry can have little hope of conveying his thought in either medium. The reader who does not know it is in an equally unfortunate position. Unless he is able to

formulate his own theory he is liable to be deceived by any charlatan who beats a little drum with sufficient energy to attract a crowd to hear him cry "Behold a poet."

What then is the difference between poetry and prose ? The question demands a full answer. No brief answer can suffice. But a brief hint can be given. Prose offers *knowledge ;* poetry *recognition.* Sometimes the knowledge prose offers is self-knowledge, and sometimes the recognition we find from poetry is self-recognition. In prose we may learn about self ; in poetry we meet self face to face.

Poetry seeks to evoke a response from the mind's most intimate and secret chords. Rhyme, rhythm, and strict form predispose the mind to such sympathetic response. The poet who abandons these aids puts himself at a disadvantage. He is like a musician trying to produce melody from an ill-attuned instrument. He may succeed in his attempt, but only by the exercise of the highest skill. Poems in prose forms are possible, but only to verbal virtuosi, and only in the hands of the really great poets can they reach the heights of poetry. Yet the really great poet will rarely deliberately place himself at such a disadvantage : as rarely would a great musician mistune his instrument. The composer, Camille Saint-Saens, produced a "Danse Macabre" by mistuning the solo violin, but it is an unique effect produced by an unique method. Novelty is sometimes the child of genius. More often it is only the last refuge of mediocrity.

Redhill. W. R. Dennett-Morgan.

CRITICS OF REVIEWERS

Subscribers to *The Author* (the official organ of the Incorporated Society of authors, playwrights and composers) may have been surprised to read in its Autumn issue the following letter : "An aspect of the Reviewing not touched on by the contributors to your symposium is the question of the last word. Is this to be the Reviewer's, the Reviewed's, or is it to go to critics of the Reviewer, as was recently my own unique experience ? I had reviewed an anthology for *John o'London's,* and a controversy ensued in which Mr. John Brophy, the editor of that journal, allowed my opponents a second innings, but refused my request to be permitted the Reviewer's accepted right to the final reply, with the result that a number of charges made against me stand unchallenged, although my unpublished answer would have shown them to be totally unjustified."

The anthology referred to is Mr. M. J. Tambimuttu's *Poetry in War-time* and needless to say I was the reviewer who had been so unjustly treated. Fortunately I had made a copy of the letter which Mr. John Brophy refused to publish ; and *here it is :*

"According to a printed note by the editor this correspondence must now cease. But the reviewer has the right of saying the last word. Mr. Peschmann says, 'I did not accuse Mr. Palmer of damning every good poet in the Tambimuttu volume—but of damning a good many, and those among the best . . .' But who were those maligned best ? I did not in my review of the anthology mention any of the 'damned' poets by name (unless it was Anne Ridler, whom I thought I somewhat praised). I did not even so much as *suggest* who they were individually. Nor did I mention the name of Alan Rook, who along with Anne Ridler, I was presently informed, had something special to teach me. Alan Rook I have dealt with, *not* in *John o'London's,* but in recent issues of *English* and *The Poetry Review ;* and afterwards I feared that I had erred on the side of overpraise. Why was his name dragged into it like that ?

"I do not know what Mr. Peschmann means when he says that I have 'shrunk from an examination' of the 'technique' of certain early poets and that I have 'failed to evaluate critically their technique' and show its influence upon Modern Verse.

Unsatisfactory poetry is unsatisfactory poetry, even if Shakespeare, Donne, or Browning wrote it. And why be influenced by the faults of these poets rather than by their great virtues ? My business in reviewing Poetry is to deal with its general effect, and not with technique divorced from content, or symbolism divorced from vision, which is equivalent to machinery without a machine, or eyes and lips without a face. Poetry must communicate something, excite the mind or spirit, even if it be not quickly understood.

"Moreover, the moderns have *not* especially distinguished themselves by reviving the alliteration of the Anglo-Saxon scops and the Middle-English poet, Langland. There are plenty of outstanding examples of this device in the poetry of Swinburne and other Victorians, and even later. Nor are the most recent moderns 'among the first voices' to insist that it was largely through our own fault that we had such a bad time in the years following 1918. What about Chesterton and half-a-dozen of his post-1918 contemporaries ? of whom I myself, I imagine, was not quite the least.

"As regards the poet, Teresa Hooley, and her more lucid criticism and fault-finding, I must contradict at least one thing. She says, 'Many of the poets reviewed in *Post-Victorian Poetry* for good or bad, are alleged to have been influenced by some other poet, in some cases by a forerunner never even read by the writer whose verse is under consideration . . .' I don't think I have mentioned any forerunner who was unread by the poet under consideration. I will send her a five-pound note if she can produce as many as *two*. I was in constant touch with many of my poets (by personal contact and correspondence) and was able to verify nearly all the supposed and detected influences. But a great number of them were sufficiently well known."

That is the letter, which, for no good reason, I was not allowed to publish. Some of the statements of my opponents verged on the libellous, and at least they were directly damaging to me as a critic, and indirectly as a poet. Moreover, I had praised a number of the poets of the anthology, in particular two young men, Alun Lewis and David Gascoyne . . . . The *Post-Victorian Poetry* referred to, is my book of criticism, which was maliciously dragged into the correspondence (in particular by Mr. Peschmann) and, of course, not mentioned by me in the review. HERBERT PALMER.

THE POET AND THE NEW ERA

I should like to express disagreement with the two letters which were written in the May-June number of THE POETRY REVIEW on "The Poet and the New Era" by H. L. Senior. Surely this finely-written and significant article, which may have been open to challenge, should have been met in a spirit of greater constructive help, and more in a manner worthy of the seriousness with which the subject was conceived.

Without committing myself to an agreement with him on every point, or holding a brief for his political views, whatever they may be, it seems to me quite reasonable that the writer of the article in the March-April number should wish to consider cause and effect and should lay them in panorama or retrospect before him, and I think that H. L. Senior has not shot his arrow very far wide of the mark in his attack on our present mode of living, and I agree that mammon must stand accused. I think that the call of money, sometimes inordinate and sometimes neccessitous for our daily support, certainly stands in the way of spiritual development, of religion, of philosophy and the enlargement of the poetical sense. Unfair systems should not continue. We cannot condone the slave-trade because some of the slaves had kind masters.

Again his call for beauty is most impressive. If beauty had become a mighty call, an active creed, instead of speculation, commerce and utility, we should not, for one matter, have had the healthful, rustic scenes in the villages of western Middlesex

converted into a disgraceful modern slum. Green spots would have been left everywhere, so that the young and the old could enjoy them and not have to travel by train or bus to get a breath of fresh air. The new houses should have been built further out.

It seems also that this writer is quite justified in his statement that never was art and aesthetic taste at so low a level; but in this matter I should divide the blame equally between the eccentrics of every art and the existence of the averred philistine. It is not a matter of pessimism but a statement of obvious fact that the theatre has declined appreciably since the great days of the actor-manager; that cubist paintings, symbolical statuary of offensive métier, jazz music, and nine-tenths of modern poetry, stampeded by a small but esoteric body of persons, have now taken the field because the public are powerless, blind, deaf and dumb to these matters. It is my opinion that in our concern for poetry, until we wash our hands of the eccentrics, the dawn of the New Era will never arise. It is the sin in our midst that must be first cast out. How right is H. L. Senior in his call for a return to the older methods of poetry and his exposure of the clever young men who write notes to each other when they affect to be reviewing!

Yes, if only for his desire for a return to beauty his article, which I would liken to a great musical composition, stands out clear and large. That the young of either sex should go out into the world and be first apprenticed to beauty—surely this is wonderful! and until we return to nobility of thought, to aestheticism and to beauty of sound, we shall make little progress. But, of course, this doctrine is not for the multitude, and we must say as the sage Yajnavalkya said to Artabhaga in *The Brahmana of the Hundred Paths*, "Give me your hand, friend, this knowledge was only made for *you and me*."

Clifford, Hereford, 26th June, 1943. ARTHUR ROW, F.R.S.A.

In the article "The Poet and the New Era," the following sentence occurs, "Unless the poet makes a more definite contribution to political thought than he has done during the last twenty years, very little improvement can be expected." Poets are not politicians. The supreme taste of all poets, artists and saints is to create a state of mind in other people so that such evils as selfishness cannot exist in a man's mind. I feel this so strongly that I am moved to write to you about it. I am not a poet myself, just an architect and for the moment a soldier, but I do think that a good state of mind is terribly important and that it alone can save the world.

Captain, R.E., Punjab, August 9th, 1943. M. A. H. HOBBISS.

THE PURSUIT OF A MIRAGE

I wish I could take up the point about Club *v.* Society as well as you. They are trying to do the same sort of thing in connection with the P.E.N. They are mistaking the concrete for the vision of the ideal and have mistaken *sodality* for *solidarity*. Do they imagine that, when the war is over, any leisure will accrue to those "lean and slippered pantaloons," the club oracle and the club bore, whom neither God nor Royal Patronage will preserve from extinction. The world will have so shrunk and pressed up against us that no man's time will be his own to do what he likes with. A leisured class is one that claims all privileges and no responsibilities and to the moneyed fools who bump up and down my road on horseback, keeping fit, after gargantuan feasts which the black market provides, I would say, in the words of Horace, *Post equitem sedet, atra cura.*"

Have you read in *The Times Literary Supplement* for September 18th, Menander's Mirror, "a leisured civilisation"? It is worth acres of barren clublands and the murality of sophisticated souls, whose vision is limited to bricks and mortar and the comforts gathered into large towns and markets. Lin Yutang is their prophet and comfort and fullsome flattery. L. CRANMER-BYNG, Great Easton.

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

A VERY large number of poems have been put forward for the premium this time and, while this may, in some degree, account for the length of the honours list, it is encouraging that no fewer than sixteen contributors have received the higher commendation. All of these deserve praise in some measure: SYDNEY RIDGEWAY, with his charming and original "Hunter's Foal"; BRENDA F. SKENE, with her unerring "From the Cleave"; D. E. C. TOMLIN, with the pleasant crystalline quality of her "Winter Again"; and GLADYS WARD, with her deeply-felt "After the Siren," are the winners; but JOYCE T. ROWE, MARGERY SMITH and CYRIL G. TAYLOR also deserve special mention and are close runners-up.

On the whole the general standard has improved, but there is still far too much facile verse sent in; too much saying the same old thing in the same old way; little freshness of outlook; little vision. It is not the function of THE POETRY REVIEW to encourage bad verse, but to foster good verse; therefore, when we are asked for criticism we do not, as so many do, seek for a redeeming feature in a bad poem and politely praise it; we give, so far as we can, a constructive criticism, pointing out faults and, where we see promise, suggesting remedies or lines for thought or study. As we have said before, *work* is always needed—hard work, ground work. As great trees must be well rooted in solid earth, so must a poem be rooted in the earth of humanity before it can spread with beauty its leaves to heaven.

We are inclined to agree with Carlyle that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains, and pains must be taken in the making of poetry as in other things: vision and skill—acquired skill—must work together. It is worth every poet's while not only to read good poetry, but painstakingly to study form, whether he himself means to use it or not, and above all to study the English language; remember that grammar and syntax play an important part in the making of poetry.

Lastly, a poet should be born anew each morning, see the world with new eyes, hear it with new ears. Without vision, remember, the people, and the poem, must perish.

PREMIUM AWARD

Sydney Ridgeway, Stockport;
Brenda F. Skene, Lustleigh;
D. E. C. Tomlin, Dunstable;
Gladys Ward, Cambridge;

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Frank Batchelor, Chinnor;
D. L. Bowen, Knighton;
Ellode Collins, Bournemouth;
W. H. Dennet-Morgan, Redhill;
Jane Scott Parsons, Derby;
Juanita Pierse, S.W.1;
Nancy Pollok, Penn;
Joyce T. Rowe, N.W.5;
Mary Savidge, Bradfield St. George;
Margery Smith, Nottingham;
Cyril G. Taylor, Bristol;
N. V. Walker, Sturminster-Newton;

COMMENDED

S. E. Bradshaw, Leek;
A. L. Brown, Middlesbrough;
T. E. Casson, Pennington;
C. W. Cockerell, Truro;
Anne R. Curzon-Howe, Warsash;
R. G. Duff, Teignmouth;
E. M. Fison, Oxford;
H. M. Forbes, Birmingham;
Patricia Galway, Hythe;
J. W. G. Heaven, Ealing;
Christine R. Henderson, Montreal;
May H. Hill, Pangbourne;
Sylvia Mary Hughes, Ickneild Way;
Wrenne Jarman, Twickenham;
John Kennedy, Newport, Mon.
L. M. Miller, Donaghadee
Anne Nix-Jones, Bristol;
T. Pittaway, Frome;
Mabel A. Rowe, Luton;
Arkell Shaw, Richmond;
Bertha M. Skeat, Sedburgh;
Hilda Slade, Worthing;
Kay Toovey, Amersham;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth;
Ronald Westbrook, New Hythe.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach "The Premium Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by December 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent.) It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author. (Entries receiwed after the formal closing date are carried forward to the next adjudication.

THE GREENWOOD PRIZE FOR 1944

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for 1944 for the best single poem in open competition addressed "The Greenwood Premium, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," before May 1st; only one poem to be submitted by any one competitor, length not exceeding 250 lines; no previously-published poem may be entered; full name and address of author must be given on each poem and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed. (If a *nom-de-plume* is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym.) It is anticipated that this annual prize will assume a high authority and significance, becoming the recognised highest annual award for a poem. Great credit is attached to the first award, the poem being regarded as a remarkable achievement. A reprint of 5,000 copies has been almost exhausted.

F. DENT (Batley) offers CONSOLATION TO ADOLF HITLER:

Not to thee alone the blame
For thy adopted country's shame.
Not by thee alone the crime
Of bloody war a second time.
Thine was but the hand that led
The nation as it chose to tread.
Thine was but the form that stood
To point the way to crime and blood.
Pay the price the nation must
For pillage, death and savage lust,
Murder, arson, rape and fear,
And it will find—the price is dear.

JOHN SAYES (Leeds) writes ON THE PASSING OF A YOUNG FLYING OFFICER KILLED IN ACTION, 1943:

I knew him when a boy,
But never thought t'would be his fate
To prove himself so much a man
Scarce having entered man's estate.
He would not have you mourn,
For these, the brave, court death to live.
Count not the number of their years
Against the service they can give.
So through your tears take heart,
This proud young viking of the sky
Was borne upon his wings to God.
He gave his life, yet did not die.

"BEHOLD THE JEW"

I am very glad to see that the Greenwood Premium Prize has been awarded to the author of a work of high missionary purpose as well as that of masterful writing. Told in white-heat speed, a story of fervour in essence, this is an unspoken denunciation against the wrongs which a much-enduring and ancient race have—and are even now—suffering at the hands of the brutal-minded or the callous. There is much quality in the verse and Ada Jackson never lowers her standard in the portions which are home-spun or mundane. This may not be a world's masterpiece, but it has in it nobility and greatness, and one feels that the prize has been given to someone who is more than a mere verse-writer and fulfils indeed the first vocation of the poet as *Prophet and Seer*.

Hereford, September 21st, 1943. ARTHUR ROW, F.R.S.A.

Please convey my humble congratulations to Mrs. Ada Jackson on her "Behold the Jew"—the best new thing I've struck for many years and, though a newcomer to the making of poetry, I am an old hand at the reading of it, and believe me I *know* "Joe" and "Mr. Isaacs": FRANK BATCHELOR, Chinnor.

MISS MARJORIE A. PALMER writes: I would like you to know how much happpiness I have derived from this delightful membership and from reading the ever-welcome POETRY REVIEW. I had been teaching since 1941, but had a nervous breakdown this year and have not been working since January. The first activities to which I went after coming out of hospital was a meeting of The Poetry Society in June. It was wonderful to be out and about again, seeing people and things—everything seemed to take on a new aspect—but beyond this was the exciting Friday in June, when I heard Mr. Herbert Palmer reading his poems from *Season and Festival*. I shall never forget it. I love the streak of mysticism in his poetry and its moving directness. The verse-speaking contests have been a great joy to me too, and it was not until I attended one of these that I fully realised the importance of sound in poetry.

I think THE POETRY REVIEW is better than it ever was and must bring solace to many: ELLA HOWARD GLOVER, Dorking.

FIELD MARSHAL VISCOUNT WAVELL, who has become a Vice-President of The Poetry Society, concluded a remarkable speech at a Pilgrims' Trust luncheon with these remarks:

> "There is one other matter which I should like to mention as in some way symbolic to my mind, of the present state of civilisation, the decline of poetry in the esteem of the general public. I do not mean merely the works of great poets which are published in books, but the ballads and songs of the people. There seems to me to be a dearth of both quantity and quality in these to-day. I hope I am wrong, since I have always in mind as true the following passage from a play written by a poet: 'If there shall ever arise a nation whose people have forgotten poetry or whose poets have forgotten the people, though they send their ships round Taprobane and their armies across Hindustan, though their city be greater than Babylon of old, though they mine a league into earth or mount to the stars on wings, what of them? They will be a dark patch upon the world'."

In its notable Notes of the Week on September 19th the *Observer* observed: Viscount Wavell, Viceroy Designate, guest of the famous Pilgrims' Society, surely earned with his forthright, unconventional speech, the hospitality of The Poetry Society, for insisting, to a gathering of successful-men-with-no-nonsense-about-them, that a nation is in a bad way without a fine song in its heart and that our poetry and balladry are in a poor way now.

TIME'S ECLIPSE

LOVE casts its spell o'er Father Time,
When we're apart the hours extend,
What weary gaps between each chime,
Days never seem to have an end.

But when in concord we consort
In some enchanted world we meet ;
The blissful hours are all too short,
The days their journey soon complete.

Sweet ecstasy makes Time dissolve,
Life speeds the more our hearts rejoice,
Love never hears dull wheels revolve
When locked within its paradise.

Time spent with you like waving flowers,
In noiseless motion seems to move,
What Lover ever heard the hours
When folded in the arms of Love ?

To you Time's currency I pay,
I think it is your lawful due,
I spend it not while you're away,
But squander it while I'm with you.

LESLIE GREENE.

AFTER THE SIREN

THIS is no silence where sweet thoughts go idly
Like beams of sunlight thwart the mind's highway—
Nor yet the languorous ease when great winds fall,
And trees, released, droop where the rain-pooled road
Lies breathless, shimmering to the lost moon's call—
Nor yet the uplifted hush of early day
When Christ's disciples meeting, kneel to pray—
No, nor love's moment of defiant peace
Wherein the eternal is to earth released—
Nor nature's silence, eloquent with sound
Unborn—in pond and new ploughed ground—
For all that silence is full filled with life
Throbbing with spirit, and alive with light—
But this, this silence, when hearts hurried beat
Hammers upon the brain, and eyelash-brush
Against the sheet is a loud sound and harsh,
This silence is heavy with waiting, black with fear
Flowing untrammelled in a million hearts
Through blackened streets—heavy with waiting.
Silence that shrieks of doom—
Oh, hurry, hurry, Luftman !
Dispense your load, shatter the land, if so
This creeping horror shall be shattered too.
And hurry, Death—you are more welcome far
Than silence wrapping life about with fear.

GLADYS WARD.

THE VOCAL INTERPRETATION OF POETRY

REPORT on the TEACHERS' CONFERENCE held at 33 PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON, W.1, on SEPTEMBER 11th, 1943 :

Mr. Guy Pertwee as Chairman welcomed the Conference, composed of headmistresses, the Society's local representatives and teachers of verse-speaking, and other school teachers, who had done so much to keep the Society active and effective, and whose devoted work had enabled the Society to grow in strength and influence, and whose presence was an assurance that when the day of victory had come the Society would present itself in a healthy and imposing state. It was important to realise that the work which was so faithfully carried on was of real national importance, as the correct speaking of English, the training of the younger generation in a better way of speaking English, was one of the most important things of to-day. The educational work of the Society was much concerned with the training of the ear, the better understanding of poetry, the love of the spoken word and the appreciation of the nation's literature and especially poetry.

Mr. Charles Tennyson (Hon. Treasurer), when welcoming the audience, stressed the necessity for criticism. He invited suggestions for improving the work of the Society and make the Society still better known. There was no doubt that the Society already possessed a stronghold on the country, but more needed to be done, and the assembly's views with regard to improvements and extensions of the Society's efforts were heartily invited.

Miss A. E. Morison, O.B.E., as one of the examiners, thanked the local representatives for their active collaboration. They all know the difficulties that had to be overcome at present.

THE ORIGINS OF VERSE SPEAKING

The Director said : "By way of preamble I would like to remind new Associates that this Conference has a definite background, definite and unique. When this Society was first formed as 'The Poetry Recital Society,' its objects and policy were very clearly and comprehensively defined in various statements that must be familiar to all of you from their continued appearance on the Society's notepaper and elsewhere—to promote : 'A more general recognition and appreciation of poetry by encouraging the public and private reading of it and developing the art of speaking verse,' the realisation of the words of Matthew Arnold of 'a clearer and deeper sense in poetry and the strength and joy to be drawn from it,' a very desirable and definite purpose amplified in Lady Margaret Sackville's presidential address, the whole constituting a background as well as an achievement of which we can be proud. It is a concrete unassailable background, not a pretentious painted façade. The two greatest masters of diction and vocal artistry, Sir J. Forbes Robertson and Sir Frank Benson, approved the design and actively and continuously collaborated in its erection. They consolidate that background still, are more than shadowy pillars of the edifice we have built. I attended on these two eminent authorities and exponents and on their colleagues and successors, who were eager and proud to serve The Poetry Society in this practical way, such excellent fellows as the beloved Basset Roe, of the Guildhall, previously Mrs. Kendal's leading man, before I ventured to award even a certificate. Their experience, their advice, their rulings animate us now.

"We can justly claim that we—and I am using the word 'we' in its proper collective sense—that we originated verse-speaking and have maintained a sound policy and practice in regard thereto. Those who are acquainted with the manifesto of The Poetry Society first issued above names of representative members in 1910 and reprinted in a recent issue of THE POETRY REVIEW, know how we defended the Society's concern for elocution then in bad repute, and effusively despised by poetas-

ters who claim that the desire to read or speak poetry convey the ability to do it. This foolish opinion still survives in various quarters. But we need not bother about it. We have quite properly dealt with elocution as supplying the technique of an art which it can be made to serve very finely and effectively when taught and practised by teachers and pupils with the proper qualifications, who can produce not only good voices, but an interpretation of poetry and an intelligent understanding of what poetry is. This reminds me that we have perhaps been too timid in the use of the term '*Verse-Speaking*.' *Poetry-speaking* would be more precise and particular and accurate.

It is the appreciation and use of poetry, not verse, which we intend to promote; and in this connotation poetry is the exact word, and the means to that end is indicated by the recent and advisable addition of the word 'diction' which covers the first and to some the final and anyhow very important step in the cultivation of spoken English. But our ultimate concern remains and always must be the vocal interpretation of poetry. The training and development of the muse of poetry is the achievement of which so much has been accomplished and on which one can become most eloquent and absorbing and inspiring beyond the resolute firm clear speech is the production of that sense of joy mentioned by Matthew Arnold, the evolution of the muse of poetry, the ability to produce an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, to seize and produce the immortality inherent in great poetry and in this way sharing in that immortality by assisting in perpetuating the poet's immortality.

I have seen the transformation of ordinary young people under the influence of poetry, the physical as well as the mental reaction, giving and finding life in the spoken word, a marvellous transformation that intensifies one's faith in poetry, a vital realisation of fundamental education in which it is a privilege and a joy to participate. You teachers, dull and irksome though your work may often be, do reap occasionally an exceedingly great reward. We are twice blessed in our collaboration.

"By the way, the report of the Norwood Committee to the Board of Education complains of the deplorable state of English in secondary schools. I took the opportunity of writing to our old friend and supporter, the ex-Head of Harrow, reminding him of this Conference and pointing out how I knew of secondary schools and of one in particular, where a knowledge of English had been extended, deepened, strengthened by the adoption of our auditions and the training incidental thereto. Sir Cyril replied: 'Thank you for your letter, with which I am in sympathy. The work of The Poetry Society is one of the ways by which better standards may be reached. But it does not help for the School Certificate and so most schools cannot be bothered. I personally do not think that English will ever be as it should be until the external examination at sixteen is a thing of the past. I agree that your work should be more widely known and I hope that in the discussions which will rage as the result of our outspoken report your work will be mentioned and will come to the fore'."

POETRY FOR CHILDREN

Miss Winifred Barrows, Principal of Lawnside, Great Malvern, initiating a discussion on "The Approach to Poetry," after expressing appreciation of what The Poetry Society is doing to encourage verse-speaking (or rather poetry-speaking, as the Director had just said it should be called) among young people, said she felt it could do still greater things for young and old in the all-important days which lie ahead.

"For many years all the girls at my school have taken the verse-speaking examinations of The Poetry Society, and the annual visit of the examiner has been a great thrill—the culminating point of their efforts—the words falling from his or her lips being eagerly awaited and long remembered. The wise choice of poetry advocated by The Poetry Society accounts, I think, in a great measure for the little ones (the under

ten-year-olds) choosing and speaking really fine poems for their own selections. I have heard eight and nine-year-olds saying, within the last year or so, lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the whole of his 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity,' William Langland's 'Introduction to the Vision of Piers Plowman,' long passages of Keats and Shelley, the whole of Matthew Arnold's 'Forsaken Merman,' Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott,' and long extracts from his 'Morte d'Arthur.' I believe all these little children derive real pleasure from saying the magnificent words of these great poems, and not merely saying them, but understanding them, for as they learn them by heart the meaning sinks in. And talking of learning by heart, I should like to read you an extract from a book Professor Dobson gave me the other day called *Ancient Education and Its Meaning to Us*—it shows how in ancient Athens this learning by heart of great poetry was an important part of education—'Almost from the beginning the children had to learn by heart and recite chosen passages of poetry . . . . Boys at Athens were encouraged to learn by heart great masses of poetry, particularly Homer and Hesiod, but also Simonides and the gnomic poets. A character in Xenophon assures us that he knew the whole of the Iliad and the Odyssey by heart.'

"I said just now that as the children learn by heart the meaning sinks in, but you may remember that Anatole France wrote, 'Unless one has grown old, one does not need to understand deeply in order to feel deeply, and what is vague and indefinite often has a great charm for youth.' Be that as it may, it is my belief that the glamour of 'magic casements' and 'perilous seas in fairylands forlorn' is never more full of enchantment than when one is very young, ten-years-old and younger.

"The Poetry Society is so wise in realising that it is when children are young and impressionable that their tastes are most easily formed, and no one who in early years has acquired a real love of literature, and especially of poetry, is ever likely to read trash in later life. Well, whether we define poetry with Coleridge as 'the best words in the best order,' or with Wordsworth as 'The breath and finer spirit of all knowledge,' I am sure we all agree that a love of it is a priceless possession—a veritable joy for ever, for much of which many of us are deeply indebted to The Poetry Society.

"The result of enthusiasm for poetry—and music—at my particular school is that people are inclined to say we only 'do' these subjects, which, of course, is quite ridiculous, because such arts, especially poetry, are only pursued at odd moments, whereas the ordinary school subjects for School and Higher Certificates, as well as games, are catered for at set times daily, but I merely mention this because such remarks go to prove that the children themselves talk about what they like best, and if they talk a great deal about the things of which they do comparatively little, what scope there is in their lives for more of these arts! I cannot help coupling music with poetry because it always seems to me that they are sister arts with much spiritually in common, and here again I would like to read to you two more short extracts from Professor Dobson's book, 'Musical instruction began at a later stage than the "grammatical"; and the object again was a moral one; music had a moral value in itself and also was indispensable to the proper understanding and interpretation of the lyric poets . . . . The Greeks attached great importance to the influence of music in the development of the character, special attention being paid to rhythm as likely to help in the formation of orderly habits and, so far as the fifth century is concerned, we know definitely that it was on these grounds that music was studied.' After that, I need not point out the enormous benefit young people derive from catching the rhythm of poetry. Nor need I touch any more on the absolute necessity of feeding children's imagination; as Bernard Shaw says, 'How else does God speak to us save through our imaginations?'

"Let me get back, therefore, to the admirable work of The Poetry Society. We all know it organises these examinations in diction and verse-speaking, setting a high standard of unaffected speech with real regard for poetic feeling and rhythm, and that in London and other centres there are interesting meetings, but what I feel we should all like to see is an awakening of the spirit of poetry throughout the country. After all, poetry is one of our greatest heritages, and if we win the war and lose that we shall be terribly impoverished, and no victory, no Beveridge Plan, no scientific invention, or anything else will compensate us for such a loss. Indeed, 'Where there is no vision the people perish.' But how are we going to get this spirit of poetry once more into the very hearts of the English people ?

"In Elizabethan times the outcome of the defeat of the Armada was poetry ; in the Golden Age of Greece the outcome of the Greek victories over the Persians was again superb poetry, but I am sure that during those stormy times poetry was very alive in the minds of everyone, so that it only needed peace to make it blossom into the fairest flowers of genius. Could not we who love poetry and The Poetry Society evolve some scheme whereby poetry meetings could be held throughout England—in its densely-populated areas as well as its green and pleasant land ? I am well aware that most of these meetings—no, not really 'meetings' (that is a soul-killing term), festivals of poetry, poetry drives if you like, with a touch of pageantry about them—I am well aware, I say, that these would, for the most part, have to be labours of love, but just think of the satisfaction good speakers, good readers, real poets would feel if they could give the public—young and old—this ancient, happy, health-giving love of poetry once more ! I say *good* speakers, *good* readers, and *real* poets, for I am afraid if the wrong people toured the countryside—however earnest and well-meaning—it would have a disastrous effect. No, a well-established body, like The Poetry Society—the only society, I believe, for promoting the love of poetry in England—could see that the right people were approached and that they tackled these tours of inspiration in the right way. The Poetry Society could, moreover, surely seek the aid of the B.B.C. and the blessing of the Board of Education and the Press, for if War Weapons and Wings for Victory Weeks have been such a success, largely through propaganda and patriotism, then surely a Poetry Week with similar propaganda would appeal to countless thousands and do wonders for the morale of the country, good as that already is.

"I feel sure that in every district in England there are enthusiasts who would pave the way and render poetry meetings a success. It is, we all know, enthusiasm that counts, and if each one of us in this room undertook to give up what time we could for a short while to the organisation of 'poetry drives' under the auspices of The Poetry Society, I am sure we could do a tremendous lot to keep England spiritually and poetically alive. I know that in my native town there would be great enthusiasm if a well-known poet, or descendant of a great poet, like Mr. Charles Tennyson, came down and 'talked poetry' or even read it in our biggest hall. But the way would have to be prepared—if necessary by the sound of trumpets—(and why can't we have a few colourful trumpet-sounding processions in the interests of art ?)—and after his visit the enthusiasm would have to be kept alive by further visits and various encouragements—all as uncommercial as possible. I always think of St. Paul's method of teaching Christianity was so wise, he would invariably re-visit his converts to 'confirm and strengthen them.' So The Poetry Society could, like St. Paul, follow up all such preliminary meetings with words of cheer and encouragement until, after a few months' hard labour, I think there might be such a renaissance of poetry as would pave the way for the first-fruits of peace—poetical works of art and golden voices to speak the

words of these unknown 'music-makers and dreamers of dreams.' Let The Poetry Society—in other words let us—see to it that it is not for want of vision that the poetry, past and future, of this England perishes."

Mr. Pertwee agreed warmly with Miss Barrows's urge to make poetry more popular. He described the B.B.C. as one of the worst obstacles to this aim. The "clotted misery" which pervaded the B.B.C. poetry recitals had little in common with the spirit in which the Greeks worshipped the poetic art.

In the following discussion Miss W. Power (Cheltenham) endorsed Miss Barrows's demand for good poetry to be used in the education of small children instead of the customary rhymes on elves and faries.

Miss Ivy Smithson (Stockton) reminded the audience of the difficulty children of mining districts had in understanding beauty. The constant ugly and depressive surroundings made it hard for them to participate in the joy which other people drew from reading Shakespeare. The right poem, that is the poem adapted to the mental level of the child, should be chosen.

Miss Barrows advised the choice of short poems and small bit of Shakespeare rather than a long poem and never to make a child learn part of a Shakespeare play without its having seen the whole play.

Miss R. Shuttleworth (Guildford) pointed out that in the choice of poems the individuality of the child was really the most important factor. Whilst there were children who had no appreciation for poetry whatsoever, there were some who surprised by their mature understanding of poetry. Mr. Pertwee advised the training of the ear and the development of the love of sound before insisting on the correct understanding of the sense of some poems.

Miss Nell Farleigh (Bideford) pointed out that in small places there were really too few people who appreciated poetry and the activities of a Centre would not be successful. Ordinary folk could not be persuaded to give time to poetry.

Mr. Tennyson said he felt that at present "festivals of poetry" alone would not be very successful, but a linking up with the other arts might help. He mentioned the satisfying development of such efforts undertaken for the visual arts.

Mrs. Martin refuted the idea that ordinary people did not like poetry and that Cntres would therefore lack support. She related how by a very careful choice of poems—in her special case, poems about country things—she roused interest in a small rural group by reading poetry whilst folks were united at a working party, mending and darning.

Mr. Leslie Knights (Romford) suggested that a Centre of The Poetry Society might co-operate with C.E.M.A.'s efforts. Poetry had a bad name and needed the support of the other arts whenever it wanted to appear in public. He was strongly in favour of "festivals of art," including spoken poetry.

Miss M. Lyons suggested that competitive festivals should be organised. More co-ordination was desirable.

Mr. Pertwee said although the majority of festivals remained competitive it was essential for the judges to insist on standard.

Miss Nancy Hull said in her experience the standard of candidates was higher in convent schools. She had had a pupil under eight who was quite capable of doing justice to "Ode of the West Wind." In elementary schools things went less smoothly, but competition had proved to be rather helpful.

Mr. T. Weston Ramsay said as a poet he found his own poems were improved when read by a trained speaker and he had even experienced that they gained a new meaning. He supported the previously-expressed view that poetry must not neces-

sarily be memorised, but the mere reading of it meant an enjoyment.

The Director reminded the audience that according to the agenda Miss Barrows was meant to introduce a discussion on the "Approach to Poetry" and that so far the discussion had been concerned with the love of poetry in the country and the schools. He related his experience with the Army Education Committee and at a Ministry of Supply hostel.

Miss M. Goodes related how poetry readings were organised for A.T.S. girls, and stressed the great difficulty of "atmosphere" in such events and how the strong discipline in the camp prevented relaxation in the way poetry readings needed. They had decided that humoristic poetry suited the occasion better than metaphysical poetry.

Mr. Tennyson suggested a Poetry Brains Trust for people to ask questions in co-operation with educational authorities.

Miss Lloyd King said that it considerably helped to combine poetry with drama in order to interest pupils.

The B.B.C. and Poetry

At this stage Mr. Weston Ramsay moved a resolution concerning the B.B.C., which, slightly modified by Mr. Tennyson and seconded by Mrs. Hickman, was adopted unanimously. It read: "While appreciating the excellent readings which are occasionally put on by the B.B.C., this meeting views with profound dissatisfaction and regret the handling of poetry by the Corporation as regards quality, quantity and times of performances and urges the Corporation to alter its present defeatist attitude on the subject."

Comments were also made on the frequent neglect of voice production by many speakers in other programmes, the tendency to fade out at the end of paragraphs, the absence of firm verbal definition and resonance, the too intimate and confidential method indulged in in many discussions and other avoidable weaknesses which handicap effective broadcasting, and could so easily be overcome by more attention being paid to the quality of the voices used, apparently the last thing to be thought about. It was also pointed out that with the more obviously trained speakers there is too much uniformity and lack of vocal character and individuality, and an almost complete absence of vitality and resolution so absolutely necessary in present conditions.

Miss Shuttleworth expressed her satisfaction with the resolution by observing that really every English person was poetic. The R.A.F. pilot coming back from his fight expressed himself in a poetic way about the beauty of the morning sky, and as long as our Empire stood and religion had its place, English poetry should be encouraged and no defeatism be allowed with regard thereto.

A short discussion on the practical points included an agreement on the due observation of pattern and rhymes and a natural sensible definition of the "Be Natural" and other current slogans.

A demand for additional Juvenile and Junior Classes was met by the adoption of Miss Leeson's proposal for a new intermediate certificate for advanced Juniors and immature Seniors. Several teachers participated in this discussion which resulted in showing how the organisation and scope of The Poetry Society's auditions had still not completely been understood. Similar indefiniteness was displayed in a discussion on the question of restrictions of medals.

Adults and Children in Sheffield

Miss Nancy Hull (Sheffield) spoke on the impressions and experiences gained in her work as a lecturer in day and evening schools, stating "In the convent schools to which I am attached a specialist in speech-training and verse-speaking is engaged. As such, it has been my privilege to enter a great number of students for The Poetry

Society's auditions. Enthusiasm runs high and I have no trouble in getting my entries. Not only the students but the parents are keen. The voices are good and the diction clear, but there is a lack of spontaneity of expression and a repression which is difficult to break down. In the day schools under the local Education Committee the students are not repressed nor is there any lack of spontaneity, but it does not show itself in the right direction, namely poetic appreciation. This is chiefly the result of this most important subject being taken by teachers who have little or no knowledge of the right approach, and certainly no love for poetry. To the general teacher it appears to be a subject on the curriculum which must be dispensed with as carelessly and as quickly as possible. It is a regrettable fact that many of the boys and girls leave these schools with a strong dislike to poetry. I am happy to report that, to a certain extent, this deplorable state of things has a chance of being remedied, for the refresher courses or summer schools for teachers have included speech-training and verse-speaking on the syllabus. I am a lecturer for summer schools and it is most encouraging to note the great number of teachers who are taking advantage of the course in order to make the best of their poetry lesson.

"The evening or continuation classes organised by the Sheffield Education Committee cater for the young people from sixteen years upwards who realise that good speech is an asset to them in their own particular line of business. These classes are held during the winter months and it is my happy experience to hold appointments in such schools. During my first year I had many students who were interested in speech but were apathetic towards poetry. It was not unusual for a new student to say 'I hope that I shall not be required to learn poetry, I am not interested in it.' Or another would say 'I wish to be taught how to speak correctly, but no poetry, please.' So for the first year I gave these evening school students speech-training, with an occasional seasoning of poetry, not merely a reading or a memorising, but a talk about it, and how one could employ voice and diction in bringing out the beauties. Gradually the students asked for more and so by the second year I was able to spread myself on the subject and think out ways and means of encouraging their interest. One evening I read extracts from THE POETRY REVIEW, which excited their curiosity. Many questions were asked. Having received so much encouragement I proceeded to talk about the Society's auditions. That evening there were many who expressed a desire to enter for the auditions. Unfortunately, that winter Sheffield suffered its worst air-raids and many of my students lost everything—families, homes, and all that they held dear, but one thing they had not lost—their new-born love of poetry.

"The big raids were in December, 1941, two weeks before the Christmas break. The schools were closed at once and I thought that an end had been made to all my plans for, I argued with myself, how can one expect these students to take up the threads of culture amidst such tragedy and desolation, so when the evening schools re-opened, very diffidently, at the end of February, 1942, I went along to my classes feeling very pessimistic, but there were my old scholars all set to carry on the torch. I can assure you that I was deeply moved. Three of the students had been out of hospital exactly ten days. Another was the only surviving member of a family of seven. Another, who on the night of the biggest raid, left the school air-raid shelter on the 'all-clear' found her home in flames and her parents lost in the flames.

"This re-union was an inspiration to me and a triumph for our poets. These students had returned from desolation to seek comfort and courage from poetry. Many of them are now silver medallists of The Poetry Society and very proud of their awards and their connection with the Society. They have a remarkable sense of rhythm and appreciation. They bring to their verse-speaking a sincerity which is the

direct outcome of suffering and deep emotional experience. The examiner at the Easter audition was greatly moved at the spirit shown, and found it difficult to believe that the only training these candidates had received was class work in evening schools.

"An apropos incident:—on the evening of the biggest raid I had one of these students with me. She had been unable to attend the last class owing to extra work at her factory and was worried because she had not been present when the latest poem had been studied. (It would be as well to explain that most of the students attended the classes after a long, hard day in the works or factories.) I suggested to this student that if she came to my studio I would help her with her problem. At the close of the lesson the warning sounded and for the rest of the night she was huddled in a blanket on the steps below my room. As the bombs fell I thought I could hear her praying, and as I listened closer I heard that she was speaking the poems she had learned at school. She told me afterwards that she had found strength and courage as she repeated the lines. This story alone must provide sufficient evidence of the 'joy and strength' which can be drawn from poetry."

After a surprising war-time lunch, in a discussion following Miss Hull's moving speech, Miss Jordan related similar experiences in day-continuation schools and evening schools, where young boys had shown great appreciation and love of poetry. As for the question of dialect, Mr. Tennyson was rather in favour of it being preserved, whilst Mr. Weston Ramsey pointed out that a poem written in King's English should be spoken in King's English. It was pointed out that girls in the Services who, for instance, trained as telephonists, could hardly be allowed to speak their dialect, and it should be possible to make people speak a correct London English as well as preserving their dialect. It was related how elderly people went in for elocution lessons in order to acquire a better grip on the correct way of expressing themselves. The Director related then what great success the verse-speaking examinations had with workers in munition factories and Mr. Tennyson amplified the statement that the workers were interested in this training by quoting success with trade schools. Mr. Pertwee confirmed these statements by relating how Waafs worked after nine o'clock at night to qualify for verse-speaking examinations.

The Value of the Shakespeare Recitals

Miss Ida Shaw (Mrs. Mortimer)—Blackburn—said: You cannot *know* your Shakespeare until you have in some small way enjoyed the speaking of his lines: but for the art of speaking the plays would possibly never have been written. Pupils realise they could completely forget themselves in the preparation of a Shakespeare scene or speech—a proof of the development of concentration—and delight of being able to leave our worldly troubles for a short space. A card sent last month by a pupil of mine who has been a prisoner of war since Dunkirk, stated: "In our theatre next week we present in full "The Merchant of Venice" in costumes hired from Berlin . . . we have been slowly 'educating' our 4,000 brethren with small doses of poetry readings and Shakespeare until they are now clamouring for it."

I am in favour of The Poetry Society's Shakespeare auditions for candidates over fifteen, because apart from the usual advantages to be gained from examinations they act as an incentive—most students and teacher work harder and with more attention to detail; from the result we are able to judge our standard in the *general* scheme of things; that in The Poetry Society's Shakespeare auditions each candidate is given an individual report and the school a collective report. If it is good we are naturally delighted, but we do not, I hope, allow ourselves to become conceited—the first sign of such self-contentment brings forth some "straight from the shoulder" speaking. We do a lot of that in Lancs.—perhaps too much. If the report is critical

it is probed and studied in detail. In most instances we are brought to see and correct our faults, but not always. But we do not decide to disagree without lively arguments which give us furiously to *think*. Then, apart from these usual advantages, if anyone asked me why my school was so keen on these Shakespeare auditions,I should answer simply "because they bring us 'real joy' from the beginning of our preparations to the end of our final discussion on the report." This book—this Shakespeare play—which was read and crammed for written examinations, with many of the speeches not completely understood (for I confess that was so in my own case), this book has been taken down from its dusty shelf, the story and portraits of the characters revived, the selected passage studied, discussed and rehearsed, until the words are brought from the printed page and made to live.

"Have these Shakespeare auditions any bread and butter value ?" asks the hard-boiled materialist. Certainly, in preparation these students collect an excellent vocabulary ; they develop clear, controlled, convincing speech ; and the courage to speak before others—all assets in every walk of life. I put the same question to a boy ticed as a motor salesman and in a short time the answer I hoped for was forthcoming : "Yes, for I am learning to understand different types of individuals, I am experiencing *being* different individuals, and so I increase my sales, by being able to better understand and adapt myself to different customers, for I couldn't sell a car to a Lancashire fish-monger in the same manner that I would approach an archbishop."

To the social welfare officer, the educationalist and the idealist, I would say, listen to what Goethe wrote :

> "His characters are like watches with dial-plates of transparent crystal ; they show you the hour like others, and the inward mechanism is also visible."

Consider the contrasting characteristics of Lady Macbeth and Cordelia, Iago and Desdemona, Hamlet and Malvolio, Shylock and Falstaff, Brutus and Cassius. These Shakespearian characters have the same human problems which surround us to-day, for fundamental emotions do not change, and these problems are of infinitely more importance than much of our conventional education. The discussions and interpretations of even short extracts of such plays stimulates thought and develops a personal philosophy—which all intelligent people must thrash out for themselves.

Young people cannot study psychological reactions of such contrasting characters without learning something of human understanding ; they cannot interpret these characters without developing imagination and courage, and are not human understanding, imagination and courage the three vital qualities of progressive life. They cannot be brought to see the inward mechanism of Shakespeare's characters without learning to penetrate the human vineer and to discern or judge in some small way the "inward mechanism" of their fellow men. The imagination of men must be developed as well as their material existence provided for (for "Where there is no vision the people perish"). I feel sure this is accomplished in The Poetry Society's Shakespeare auditions.

In the following discussion Miss Morison underlined the need to make children play the Shakespeare scenes. It was stressed that the playing of scenes when qualifying for the Shakespeare Plaque was quite an eligible possibility within the scope of the examination, though it made the work of examining more difficult.

Mr. A. V. Burbury, on rhythmic prose reading, explained how the effect of poetry could be surpassed by prose when read with an accentuated rhythm. The prose of past centuries worked out to quite a different rhythm than to-day's prose and it was necessary to make oneself acquainted with the correct rhythm of a prose piece. Mr. Burbury quoted several examples.

Miss Smithson expressed her great gratification with the Society's rhythmical prose readings, which were appreciated in the schools. Miss Shuttleworth recognised Mr. Burbury's statement that stammer could be cured by making simple prose reading for a stammerer a rhythmic exercise as well. There was such a thing as an individual rhythm and the respect for rhythm should be cultivated as obviously the whole creation was rhythmic. Mr. Tennyson pointed out that there was a difference between rhythm and metre. The term "metrical prose" might be more correct. Miss Morison proposed to change over to the term "biblical poetry," and Miss Shuttleworth suggested that it would be really the best and bravest thing to call it "biblical reading." The discussion then went out to find a definition for "rhythmic prose" and the difference between "rhythmic prose" and "free verse." Mr. Pertwee thought that it might well be called "cadenced verse," and every type of verse that did not run or trot in a certain time might come under the definition of "free verse" or "rhythmic prose." Mr. Tennyson thought that prose printed in a certain fashion might be considered as "rhythmic prose" or "free verse."

Miss Marjorie Lyon urged co-ordination, co-operation, standardisation in speech training. In the following discussion it was again stressed that one had to differentiate between "uneducated speech" and "educated speech," and that whilst not wanting to be too rigid on the word "standard" it seemed desirable to improve on very bad dialects and such ways of speech which made understanding difficult. Miss Leeson supported the idea of "basic English" as being a help in facilitating a general understanding amongst people of the English language.

Mrs. Bell (York) advocated choral speaking. Miss Barrows said that it was important to have a good method when undertaking the training of choral speaking. Mr. Pertwee advised that it was quite important to see that choral speaking was only considered as another form of the training of the individual and that it must not degerate into a general shout of mass-produced voices. Two other authors, Marjorie Gullan and Clive Sansom, were cited as authorities in choral speaking. It was proposed to formulate a statement expressing the feeling of the meeting that choral speaking might well be included in the poetry syllabus. The Director explained that thirty years ago choral speaking was drpped by the Society. It was considered as rather harmful for the development of individual speech and likely to develop into nothing but a physical exhibition and too much regimentation.

IT WILL BE STRANGE

IT will be strange to lie in bed beneath quiet skies—
Not to hear the 'planes going out, going out, going out
Across the night upon their hazardous enterprise ;
To lie maybe and watch through windows widely flung the mocked moon rise
Triumphant and serene, and on the hills who knows ? a shepherd's light glowing out
Like some long-dimmed forgotten star . . .
And down the valley where the moonlight dyes
Its course with sudden silver, the winding river will be flowing out
To meet the peace-wrapped sea whereunder no blind perils range,
Whereover no grim siren-heralded raider flies . . .
It will be strange—
And stranger still to dream, as little winds come blowing out
The stars along day's dawn-lit corridor,
That but a few short hours ago there was a war.

CYRIL G. TAYLOR.

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